

THE  
MEDITATIONS  
OF THE EMPEROR

*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.*

TRANSLATED  
FROM THE GREEK ORIGINAL  
BY THE  
REVEREND RICHARD GRAVES, M. A.

231/62

THE  
MEDITATIONS

OF THE EMPEROR

*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.*

A NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK  
ORIGINAL; WITH A LIFE, NOTES, &c.

BY

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DOWAGER OF CHATHAM.



BATH, PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL,

FOR

G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER-RROW,  
LONDON. M DCC XCH.

TO  
THE HONOURABLE  
EDWARD JAMES ELIOT,

ONE OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
TREASURY, AND MEMBER FOR LISKEARD  
IN CORNWALL.

S I R,

**A**S I am convinced the permission with which you have honoured me, of prefixing your name, will be no small credit to this publication, I should be unhappy if the performance should do any discredit to so respectable a patron.

Some

Some indulgence, however, must be claimed from the candour of the publick, as the original of this admired work is confessedly, in some parts, extremely difficult and abstruse: for which reason, also, it has not, I believe, been generally read in the present age: so that, perhaps, even you, Sir, and your young associates in the administration, may, without knowing it, have been acting on the noble and publick-spirited Maxims of Marcus Antoninus.

He was a philosopher from his youth; and coming to the govern-  
ment

ment of a great empire, at a very critical period, as the love of his country was his ruling principle, so he made its prosperity the chief study and employment of his whole life.

In short, Sir, it is, I think, universally agreed, that Marcus Antoninus was one of the best sovereign princes, and one of the most virtuous men of ancient times ; and I know of but one sovereign prince in modern times, who can rival him in both those respects ; whose efforts also for the service of his country, from the instruments employed in that service, will, I trust, be  
employed

attended, as they hitherto have been,  
with equal success.

I have the honour to subscribe  
myself,

S I R,

Your much obliged

and obedient servant,

RICHARD GRAVES.



## P R E F A C E.

A SLIGHT VIEW OF THE STOIC  
PHILOSOPHY, &c.

THE diffusion of science amongst all ranks of people, in this age, (by the means of reviews, magazines, and other periodical publications) is astonishing, and beyond all example. Hence the mechanic decides on religious controversies, and the haberdasher arraigns the conduct of statesmen: Our young ladies write novels for the *amusement*, and school-boys moral

B ral

ral essays for the *improvement* of their grandmothers. Nay, in conversation, these retailers of superficial knowledge often eclipse, in the opinion of the vulgar, men of profound erudition; and, in their own opinions, surpass all the sages of antiquity.

The wise maxims therefore of an ancient philosopher, though of imperial rank, have but a slender chance of gaining attention in so enlightened an age; and in a country where every newspaper is fraught with apothegms, and every evening club is a Lyceum or school of philosophers.

Yet, notwithstanding these disadvantages, these meditations and occasional reflections abound with so much good sense,



sense, and such original thoughts,\* such virtuous principles, such benevolence and love of mankind, and such a religious regard to the *common rights* of his fellow-creatures; that a system of morality might be extracted from them, *only* surpassed by that of the gospel; and a system of politics *not* surpassed even by the refinements of modern patriotism.

These maxims are not the reveries of a private *recluse*; but the reflexions of a statesman, a soldier, and a sovereign prince, engaged in the tumultuous

\* By original thoughts, however, in a highly-polished state of society, little more can be meant than the setting in a new light

“What oft was thought, but ne’er so well  
express’d.”

POPE.

scenes of life; and most of them suggested by actual situations.

I do not consider such unconnected precepts, however, as forming a volume that any one will read through at a sitting; but as a “book to lie in a parlour window,” (as Montaigne says) from which a man may pick up some useful hints while he is waiting for his dinner.

A lady in private life, equally distinguished by her piety and her ingenuity, assured me, many years since, that she had received more advantage, in her youth, from the morals of Epicurus, (whom Marcus Aurelius often imitates, and sometimes excels) than from any book she ever read—except her bible.

These reflections on his own conduct, indeed, inculcate, with great force, our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; which comprehends the chief duties of a Christian. And it is evident, that the philosophical Earl of Shaftesbury was greatly indebted to our author, and other writers of the porch and of the old academy, for his refined system of morality and sublime theism. For, though the character of an humble Christian might be thought beneath the dignity of a British peer, the pride of a stoic would prevent him from acting beneath the dignity of human nature.

Yet after all that can be said in favour of our author's writings, and those

of any unenlightened pagan moralist, there are such strange defects and inconsistencies to be found in their opinions and precepts, as sufficiently shew the necessity of some authoritative republication of the law of nature; (such as Socrates wished for) and such as the greatest sceptic (one would think) must acknowledge to have been made by the author of our religion.

Perhaps then the combating vice with the weapons of philosophy, instead of those of the Gospel, at this time of day, may be thought as trifling and childish, as our gentlemen archers reviving the use of the bow, since the invention of guns; yet I should hope, it would be more than mere *amusement*,  
for

for those who deem the precepts of the Gospel impracticable, to observe how far a heathen sage, by the mere efforts of reason, could proceed in subduing his passions, and in the practice of the most rigid virtue. At all events, they may be attended with an advantage to a Christian, similar to that of an Englishman's travelling into some despotic country; to make him return with greater satisfaction to his own.

But the younger Casaubon, who published both an edition and translation of this work about the middle of the last century, says, “It is not only the most *excellent*, but the most *obscure*, of all the remains of antiquity.”

Yet

Yet this is to be ascribed, partly, to the studied brevity\* of these memoirs, which were evidently written principally for the Emperor's own satisfaction and moral improvement, in the momentary intervals of an hazardous campaign: though probably not without a view to his son Commodus's instruction.

But another cause of the obscurity of some of these meditations, is, his perpetually alluding to the peculiar doctrines of the Stoicks; which the

\* His frequent use of compounds, particularly the neuter adjectives, to express a whole proposition, as *απολυπαραγμον*, “the not impertinent interference in other people's affairs” &c. As we say, “the *beautiful*, the *sublime*” &c.

reader



reader must therefore always keep in view.†

They considered the universe as one great community, governed by an irreversible system of laws, which they called Fate: And as the good of every individual was dependent on and in-

† It is very difficult to give a clear and consistent account of the stoical doctrines, as the later disciples of Zeno, their founder, differ widely from the earlier, and most of them from their master. I have only endeavoured to give a slight view of those principles to which our author most frequently alludes.

Those who would see more on the subject, may consult Gataker's Preface; to whose labours every Commentator and Translator must acknowledge themselves greatly obliged.

See also Cudworth, or a *concise* account in the excellent Dr. Beattie's Evidence of Christianity; or a more diffuse account in Dr. Adam Smith's "Theory &c.

cluded

cluded in the welfare of the *whole*; it was the duty of every one to submit to, and chearfully acquiesce in, every event, (whether prosperous or adverse to themselves) as it made a part of that connected series of causes and effects, which necessarily resulted from the original contrivance and arrangement of the whole.

From this system, however, they by no means excluded an intelligent, super-intending Providence, the Governor of the universe. Marcus Aurelius, at least, always speaks of a God, as presiding, not only over the universe in general, but as extending his care to every individual; who were therefore bound to worship and obey him,  
and



and to regulate all their actions with a view to his approbation.

Whether Antoninus or the other stoics are always consistent in this opinion, may perhaps be questioned. But, whatever idea they had of *Fate* or *Necessity*, they always speak of Man, as a *free* agent; and of the First Cause, as Pope does ;

“ Who, binding Nature fast in Fate,

“ Left *free* the human *will*.”

They sometimes indeed seem to confound the Deity with Nature: and speak of God, as no more than the “*anima mundi*,” or soul of the material world: a kind of plastic principle, which pervades and animates it, as the human soul does the body. But they  
seem

seem to me, to have made the same distinction between the first intelligent cause, and this ætherial substance, as between the rational soul of man, and the mere animal or vital spirit; which they held to be only a small particle, discerpt or separated from the soul of the world; and, after death, reformed and reunited to it, without any distinct, personal existence. This, however, must be understood in a qualified sense; as they believed that the perfectly good or heroic souls were admitted to the society of the Gods.

Their idea of the periodical renovation of the world by repeated conflagrations, and the continual changes of one substance into another, (to  
which

which our author so frequently alludes) is very remarkable; and somewhat analogous to the modern hypothesis of volcanos; and perhaps took its rise from some fiery eruptions in the time of the first propagators of that opinion.

As to the moral sentiments of the Stoics, though they allowed nothing to be really *good*, but what was honourable or *virtuous*; and nothing *evil*, but what was *base*; yet it is absurd to suppose that they were absolutely *indifferent* to pain or pleasure, sickness or health, poverty or riches, and the like. They thought it their duty to support that state of existence in which nature had placed them, in the most perfect manner. But a wise man was to chuse  
or

or reject every object which presented itself, according to its moral excellence: and to bestow that precise degree of attention on it which it deserved. He therefore never suffered any external advantages to come in competition with those of the mind: nor to regard *natural* evil in comparifon with *moral*. The gout, for instance, was no evil, when compared to remorse of confcience; nor poverty, when opposed to a life of infamy or dependence, and the like.

Even their errors fhewed their exalted ideas of virtue. They faid,\* (or

\* Dr. Adam Smith fufpects, that the voluminous writer Chryfippus, the fcholar of Zeno, propagated many of thefe ftoical paradoxes; this in particular, which Horace fo facetioufly ridicules in his third fatire.

are

are supposed to say) that all sins were equal; because they thought the least deviation from the line of rectitude inconsistent with the character of a good man. They endeavoured to eradicate the passions; but it was to assert the supremacy of reason. In reality, nature frequently rebelled, and gave the lie to their doctrines. Antoninus himself says of his friend Sextus, that, in spite of his apathy, he was “φιλα-  
 σοφωτάτος, the most affectionate man in the world.”

They called *compassion* the sickness of the soul, and would not suffer their wise men to *pity* a person in distress—but to *assist* him. Seneca indeed seems strangely puzzled to distinguish be-  
 tween

tween a wise man and a fool, with respect to the feelings of nature.

A wise man might be alarmed at a sudden noise; or his knees might tremble, when he was to speak in public: But a wise man soon recovers himself; whereas a fool loses his presence of mind, is embarrassed and confounded.

Their greatest absurdity, however, was their allowing of *suicide*, when life was no longer eligible. For if pain or poverty were no evil; and their wise men could be happy even in torture; how could it be lawful to desert his station, and act contrary to the established course of nature on that account?—the conforming to which is  
the



the perpetual theme of our good Emperor's admonitions.

“ If you chuse to sup with a man,” says Epictetus, “ and cannot bear his long stories about the Mœsian wars,\* you may retire and leave him.” Yes; but you will affront your host; as it is to be feared, we should offend the

\* This hospitable veteran seems to have been as circumstantial in his *narratives*, as Sterne's “ Uncle Toby:”

“ Now, Sir, (says he) having told you how I took *possession* of such-a-place; I'll tell you how I was besieged in such a place” &c.

As Epictetus had been the slave of Epaphroditus, a captain of the guards to Nero, he probably revenged himself thus on this master, for his brutal treatment of him—which should be a lesson to *masters* in every age.

C

Governor

Governor of the world, by a voluntary death.

On the whole, though the reasoning of the philosophers can never destroy that connexion which nature has established between our passions and affections, and the objects which are adapted to excite them; yet it cannot be doubted, that the stoic philosophy had great influence on the character and conduct of its professors; and excited many of them, particularly the good Antoninus, to actions of the most heroic magnanimity and the most extensive benevolence.

*POST-*



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*P O S T C R I P T.*

It will probably be asked, what necessity there was for a new translation of this work, when there has been already one or two published within these fifty years? I answer, that when I first engaged in it, in my retired situation, I could get no intelligence from the neighbouring bookfellers, of any other than that of Jeremy Collier, at the beginning of this century; which abounds with so many vulgarisms, anilities, and even ludicrous expressions,

pressions,‡ and is, in many places, so unlike the original, that one cannot now read it with any patience.

When I had got into the ninth book, however, I accidentally met with one, printed at Glasgow in 1747, which is very faithful to the original in general; but often so unnecessarily *literal*, and with such a total neglect of elegance and harmony of style, that there is certainly room for improvement;—this I may suppose to have attempted,

‡ It is invidious to point them out in so respectable a writer, but they occur in almost every page. “Thieves, whores, and catamites, run away with the world; who then would care *three-pence* for it?” People will act as they have done, though you *fret* your heart out, “some love their *wenches*, some their money” &c. &c.

or

or why thus intrude upon the public? But, alas! I must rely on the candour of the reader, not in this instance alone: And (in a work, where so much room is left for *conjecture*) some indulgence seems but reasonable; especially in those *mutilated* passages, or *imperfect hints*, which the best commentators have viewed with despair.

In short, as I have endeavoured to steer between the *loose* translation of J. Collier, who often loses sight of his author; and the *dry* manner of the Glasgow translator, who generally sticks too close to him; I do not entirely despair of gaining more attention to one of the most curious, and in the opinion  
of

of M.\* Casaubon, one of the most *excellent* works of antiquity.

\* Meyric Casaubon, one of the most learned men of the last century: he was prebendary of Canterbury; but deprived of his preferment, when Cromwell sent his private secretary (Mr. Greaves, of Gray's Inn) with an offer of 300l. a-year, if he would write an *impartial* history of the civil war: which, though he had a large family, he declined. Cromwell, however, (much to his credit) remitted him privately, without any conditions, a present of 400l.

A SHORT

A SHORT SKETCH  
OF THE  
L I F E  
OF  
MARCUS AURELIUS.



## A SHORT SKETCH

OF THE LIFE OF

*MARCUS AURELIUS.*

**T**HE City of Rome, from its first foundation by Romulus, was governed by kings, for about two hundred and fifty years. After their expulsion, the Commonwealth was administered by two Consuls, annually chosen, for about four hundred and fifty years; when Julius Cæsar, about fifty years before the birth of Christ, having subdued Pompey and what was called the Republican Party, made himself perpetual Dictator; and was the first Emperor of Rome.

After

After a succession of eleven more Emperors, a majority of whom were execrable tyrants, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian, came to the throne; under whom the Empire rose to its utmost splendor; although the remote provinces were with difficulty kept in subjection, even by *their* wise and firm administration.

The latter of these, the Emperor Hadrian, adopted Antoninus Pius, on condition that he should immediately adopt our Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the son of C. Commodus, his late favourite; whom before he had intended for his successor.

Marcus Aurelius was born about the year 121 of the Christian æra; soon after the Emperor Hadrian's accession to the throne. He was of an illustrious family, both by the father's and mother's side; being the son of Annius Verus and Domitia Calvilla Lucilla; both whose fathers were of consular dignity.

M. Aurelius was first called Annius Verus, the name of his father and of his grandfather; but on being adopted into the Aurelian



lian family by Antoninus Pius, he took the name of Aurelius; to which, when he came to the empire, he added that of Antoninus. As he was early about the court, the Emperor Hadrian had called him "*verissimus*;" but that seems to have been only a name of fondness and familiarity; as he was always a favourite with that Emperor from his infancy.

His father dying while he was very young, he had been bred up chiefly in the family of his grandfather Annius Verus, who gave him every advantage in his education, which even that polished age could supply. He had masters in every science and genteel accomplishment; even in music and painting among the rest.

He was also, in his youth, very fond of all the manly and athletic exercises; hunting, wrestling, tennis, and the like: but his passion for the stoic philosophy soon got the ascendant of all other amusements, till he came to the imperial throne; when his time was wholly employed on more important affairs.

M.



M. Aurelius indeed seems to have had a natural propensity to stoicism; being from his earliest youth of so serious and steady a disposition, that he was hardly ever seen, on any occurrence, to change his countenance. He is mentioned, however, to have shed tears on the death of his first tutor; on which occasion, being rallied by some one about the court, Antoninus Pius said, “You must give him leave to be a *man*; neither philosophy nor the imperial dignity can extinguish the feelings of nature.”

On the death of Antoninus Pius, then, who had adopted him, our author Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was, with difficulty, prevailed on to take the reins of government, in the year 161.

That he was sincere in the reluctance which he expressed on this occasion, his invariable attachment to the severity of the stoic discipline, and his uniform contempt of the pomp and pageantry of life, leave us no room to doubt.

M. Aurelius, in conformity to the intention of Hadrian, immediately assumed  
Lucius

Lucius Verus, as his partner in the empire: to whom also he contracted his daughter Lucilla. But Verus enjoyed these *unmerited* honours only a few years.

M. Aurelius himself had married the younger Faustina, his first cousin, being the daughter of Antoninus Pius, by the elder Faustina; sister to M. Aurelius's own father.

Notwithstanding his aversion to the cares and toils attendant on royalty; yet, when he had once engaged in them, he never suffered his fondness for study and philosophical retirement to interfere with his duty to the public, and his more than parental care of the empire.

Indeed, the many calamities and tumults which, immediately on his accession, threatened and disturbed the tranquillity which he wished to establish, called for all his care and attention. The inundations, earthquakes, the famine and pestilence, which infested Rome and every part of Italy, were but the prelude to insurrections in the provinces, and to hostile invasions of the empire on every side. The former calamity, however, occasioned by inundations, &c.  
he

he by his extraordinary efforts considerably alleviated. And the latter, I mean the incursions of the barbarians in the provinces, by his own activity and fortitude, and by a prudent choice of his lieutenants, he for the present suppressed; though the high spirit of liberty and independence, which actuated the Northern nations, was not entirely subdued during the good Emperor's reign.

It is not necessary (for our purpose) to relate the particulars of these wars in the North; nor of the revolt of Cassius, his lieutenant, in the East; the conducting the former of which redounds equally to the courage and to the conduct of M. Aurelius; and the suppression of the latter, to his justice, clemency, and humanity.

Yet it may be expected, perhaps, that something should be said of one remarkable event in this reign; which has been the subject of much controversy; I mean, the apparently miraculous deliverance of the Emperor and the Roman army from their most desperate situation, in the mountains of Germany; into which they had been led by too eager and incautious a pursuit of the enemy.

They

They were inclosed, on every side, by sandy cliffs and barren rocks; and the passes seized by the Germans; the heat of the sun was intolerable, and their thirst so intense, that they entirely lost all their strength and spirits; and notwithstanding the encouragement of their Emperor, they sunk under their distresses, and refused to make any further efforts for their escape, and must inevitably have perished in a very short time.

The enemy were well acquainted with their situation, and were preparing to attack them, and to seize on their resistless prey. But at this critical juncture, such an unexpected and such a plentiful shower of rain came to the assistance of the Romans, (which they caught in their shields and helmets) attended with such a tremendous storm of lightening, thunder, and hail, which directed its whole force against their adversaries; that the latter, being attacked by the Romans, were put to flight, and completely routed.

All the historians of that time, speak of this transaction as something miraculous: the Heathen writers of course ascribe it to the  
the

the piety and prayers of the good Emperor. The Christian fathers, on the contrary, impute it entirely to the devout and solemn prayers of the Twelfth Legion, which was composed chiefly of Christians; and add, “That it was thence called the Thundering Legion.” This, indeed, has been incontestably proved by Mr. Moyle to be a mistake; as that legion had the same name in the time of Augustus, though hardly from the *thunder-bolt* on their shields, but probably from some event which alluded to by a medal of Augustus; the legend of which is “IOVI TONANTI.”

What may be said, however, in favour of the latter opinion is, that the preserving three or four thousand Christians, in consequence of their solemn prayers, offered up in the presence of the whole army, was an event, which in the infancy of our religion appears to be of some importance, towards the further propagation of the Gospel. The primitive fathers speak with confidence of some indulgence shewn to the Christians,  
by



by the Emperor, on this account.\* If it be objected, “that, according to our modern ideas, Providence would hardly work a miracle in favour of a commander, who was engaged in supporting an unwarrantable system of conquest, inimical to the *natural rights* and happiness of mankind;”—it may be answered, that most of these nations had been conquered and reduced to Roman provinces by former Emperors, and were become the subjects of the Empire. It seems therefore to have been the duty of M. Aurelius, as a sovereign who was appointed to govern and command the armies of the State, to reduce those provinces to their obedience.

The humanity of the Emperor, however, in conducting the war, was conspicuous; as he did every thing in his power to moderate the ferocity of his troops after victory; and often went in person to the field of

\* There is an allusion to this victory on a medal of M. Antoninus; where Jupiter is represented in a quadriga, with a “thunder-bolt” in his hand, and trampling on a Barbarian; as the Romans called the Northern nations.

battle, to assist the wounded; and to the woods and marshes, to encourage those that fled (and concealed themselves) to trust to his clemency, and surrender.

And how little value he set upon military glory, may appear from many passages in these Meditations.

“The spider,” says he, “triumphs in having ensnared a poor fly; the sportsman a poor hare; the fisherman a gudgeon, and the like; and a soldier delights in having seized a party of the *poor Sarmatians*.”

“Now are not all these equally *robbers*?” says the good Emperor, b. x. 10.

It is equally unnecessary to delineate the character of M. Aurelius, which will be sufficiently displayed in the following wise Maxims; as he is universally allowed to have exemplified them in his own conduct.

I shall only observe, in general, that, in his publick character, he was indefatigable in his care of the empire, and in the administration of justice; sitting frequently till night to investigate any intricate cause: and though he treated with lenity the convicted criminals,

criminals, where any circumstance appeared in their favour; yet he was inflexible in putting the laws in execution, where the common good, or the supporting the authority of the magistrate, seemed to require it.

As for his permitting the Christians to be persecuted in the beginning of his reign, though nothing can be urged in defence of persecution for religious opinions, yet as those persecutions were carried on with the greatest rigour under some of the wisest Emperors, we may suppose there was some specious political motive for so inhuman a proceeding.

It is the duty of a good magistrate to preserve the peace of the community; and as Christians were obliged by their principles to oppose the popular superstitions,\* they were accused of raising tumults, and, under the name of Jews, were expelled Rome in the reign of Claudius:§ And as

\* See Bishop Warburton's Div. Leg. b. ii. c. 6.

§ Judæos, impulsore Chrestô, assiduè tumultuantes, Româ expulsi. SUET.

The Jews, at the instigation of one *Chrestus*, raising continual tumults, he banished them from Rome.



their numbers daily increased in every part of the empire, their assemblies were represented, by the governors of the provinces, as dangerous to the state; and therefore might well excite the jealousy of the civil magistrate.

In his private character, notwithstanding the stoical gravity of his appearance, M. Aurelius was extremely affable and condescending in his address, and had all that candour and humanity in making allowances for the foibles of others, which he so strongly (and so *repeatedly*) recommends in these “Meditations;” and was truly, what is said of our good Mr. Nelson,

“To others *mild*, as to himself *severe*.”

He frequently visited upon a footing of equality, and conversed with the utmost freedom (where it was proper) with the senators and patricians; and was always pleased to hear what was said of him or his administration, for the sake of regulating or reforming it, if it appeared to be necessary or expedient.

In

In short, I cannot but consider Marcus Aurelius as one of the first characters of pagan antiquity; not inferior to Socrates himself; as the serving our country, in active life, is a more unequivocal test of merit, than merely *attempting* to improve or correct their morals.

M. Aurelius died, after a short illness, in his fifty-ninth year, at Vindebonum on the Danube (now Vienna) in his last expedition against the Northern nations.

His death, we may be sure, was lamented by all ranks of people, with the most poignant and undissembled grief.†

The Senate decreed him divine honours, and erected him a statue of gold; and even declared such persons infamous, who had not some picture or bust of M. Aurelius in their houses.

† It is really affecting to observe the gratitude of the Romans to their good Emperors; and on the further decline of the Empire, their complimenting the least spark of virtue (on their medals) with “*Fœlix temporûm reparatio.*”

*N. B.* I have called this Emperor MARCUS AURELIUS, as he is better known by that name in modern times; though after his accession he is generally styled MARCUS ANTONINUS on his medals.



THE  
MEDITATIONS

OF THE EMPEROR

*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.*



# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK I.

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§. 1. **F**ROM the example of my grandfather VERUS, I acquired a virtuous disposition of mind, and an habitual command over my temper.\*

2. From the character which I have heard and from what I myself remember of

\* The good Emperor begins, with great modesty and simplicity, by gratefully recollecting those on whose model and instructions he had formed his moral character.

As Καλονηθες is not found in any other author, it is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning here, and to reconcile it with ηθος in the 7th section. This sense was suggested by two gentlemen well known in the literary world.

my

my *own* father,\* I have learned to behave with modesty, yet with a manly firmness, on all occasions.

3. My mother† I have imitated in her piety and in her generous temper, and have been taught not only to abstain from doing any wicked action, but from indulging a thought of that kind.

By her also I was habituated to a simple and abstemious way of life; very far from the luxury of a sumptuous table.

4. To my great-grandfather I am obliged, both for permitting me to attend the publick recitals and declamations in the Rhetorick schools,‡ and also for procuring me the best masters at home; and for

\* Annius Verus, to distinguish him from Antoninus Pius, who adopted him. He died when our author was very young.

† Domitia Calvilla Lucilla.

‡ Those who talk of his “not running the risk of a publick school” contradict the truth of history. “Frequentavit et declamatorum scholas publicas.”

CAPITOLIN,

making

making me sensible, that one ought not to spare any expence on these occasions.

5. From my governor (who had the care of the earlier part of my education) I learned not to engage in the disputes of the Circus or of the Amphitheatre; the chariot races, or the combats of the gladiators.\*

He also taught me to endure hardships and fatigues; and to reduce the conveniences of life into a narrow compass; and to wait on myself on most occasions: Not impertinently to interfere in other people's affairs, nor hastily to listen to calumnies and slander.

6. DIOGNETUS cautioned me against too eager a pursuit of trifles; particularly, not to busy myself in feeding quails,§ (for the pit or for divination.)

As also not to give credit to vulgar tales of prodigies and incantations, and evil spi-

\* The parties (which the classical reader knows ran high at this time) were distinguished by their *colours* in the races; and by their *instruments* amongst the gladiators.

§ They foretold the success of their own projects by the fighting of these quails.



rits cast out† by magicians or pretenders to forcery, and such kind of impostures.

He taught me to bear patiently the free expostulations of my friends; to apply myself with assiduity to the study of philosophy; and introduced me, first, to hear Bacchius, and after that, Tandafides and Marcianus. And, while I was yet a boy, he put me upon writing dialogues as an exercise; and also taught me to relish the hard couch covered with skins; and other severities of the stoical discipline.

7. From Rusticus\* I received the first intimation, that the general disposition of my mind needed some correction and cure. He prevented me from entering with warmth into the disputes, or indulging in the vanity of the Sophists; writing upon their speculative points, or perpetually ha-

† Some commentators have *fancied*, that he here alludes to the Christian miracles; but it is more probable, from the context, that he meant no more than those vulgar superstitions which have prevailed in all ages.

\* A stoic philosopher, a statesman, and a soldier; the particular favourite and confidant of M. Aurelius.

ranging

ranging on moral subjects; or making any ostentatious display of my philosophical austerities, or courting applause by my activity and patience under toil and fatigue.

To this philosopher I am obliged for my not pursuing too far the study of rhetorick and poetry, or laying too great a stress on elegance of style. From him also I took the hint, not to assume any state, or appear in my *imperial robe*† at home and in my own family, and the like.

He also taught me to write letters in a plain, unornamented style; like that of his to my mother, from Sinuessæ.

From his admonitions, I learned to be easily *reconciled*‡ to those who had injured

† The original is *stola*, which M. Casaubon translates “*toga*”; but the Emperor hardly went about the house in his waistcoat or tunic. It certainly means the *imperial* or *senatorial* robe.

‡ The original word is one of those comprehensive compounds, which the author so frequently uses, and implies, “the not *pursuing* our resentment too far.” For which use of it, Gataker quotes Xenophon, who advises sportsmen to “give their dogs *short* names, that they may *call them off* with more ease.” CYNEGET.

or offended me, the moment they seemed inclined to return to their duty:

And also to read an author with care and attention, and not to content myself with a general superficial view of his subject, nor immediately to resign my opinion to every plausible declaimer.

It was Rusticus also who made me acquainted with Epictetus's works, which he sent me from his own library.

8. APOLLONIUS taught me to maintain the freedom of my mind, a constancy independent of fortune; and to keep a steady eye, in the most minute instance, to the dictates of reason; to preserve an even temper, and to be like myself on the most trying occasions, under acute pains, tedious sicknesses, or the loss of children. And by his own *living* example he convinced me, that a man may be rigid in his principles, yet easy and affable in his manners, and free from any moroseness in delivering the precepts of his philosophy. In short, it was evident, he was so far from valuing himself on his experience and skill in explaining the theories

theories of the philosophers, that he thought it the least of his accomplishments.

From Apollonius also I learned the proper manner of receiving (what are esteemed) favours from our friends, without too humiliating an expression of our obligations, and yet without the appearance of our being insensible of their kindness.

9. In SEXTUS\* I had an example of a truly benevolent disposition, and of a family governed with a paternal care and affection. From his example I formed a resolution of living according to nature, of preserving an unaffected gravity in my deportment, and a careful attention to the expectations of my friends; to bear with the ignorance of the vulgar, and those that take up their opinions at random, without examination; in short, to accommodate myself to the opinions of those I conversed with, like that philosopher; whose conversation, by that means, was more engaging than the most

\* Sextus Choeronensis, the grandson of the most excellent Plutarch.

delicate flattery could have made it;† yet he lost nothing, by that condescension, of that reverence which was always paid to his character.

Sextus also suggested to me a compendious and regular system of maxims necessary for the conduct of life; while, in his own person, he never discovered the least symptom of anger or perturbation of mind from any violent passion; yet with all this apathy, he was susceptible of the warmest affection and attachment to his friends and relations.\*

Finally; This good man had acquired an uncommon share of reputation without noise, and of deep learning without ostentation.

† See Tully's elegant character of Brutus: "*Cum gratiæ causâ nihil facias; omnia tamen sunt grata, quæ facis.*"

Orat. §. 35.

\* *Naturam expellas furcâ, licet usque recurret.*

HOR.

The Stoic against Nature fights—

Yet she returns and claims her rights.

ANONYM.

10. From



10. From ALEXANDER the grammarian, I learned not rudely to criticise any solecism or impropriety of expression or pronunciation, but dexterously to pronounce the word again in a proper manner, either by way of answer or enquiry; or as if to confirm what was said, and not as anxious about the expression; or, in short, by some other skilful address, to set the person right.

11. FRONTO the orator informed me, how much envy, intrigue and dissimulation, usually prevailed under tyrannical governments, and observed, that those whom we call *nobility* are too often void of natural affection and the common feelings of humanity.

12. I am obliged to ALEXANDER the Platonist, for the hint, “not often, nor ever, without a necessity, to complain, either in my letters or in the common intercourse with my friends, of my want of leisure; nor under a pretence of extraordinary embarrassment to decline or evade the common offices of friendship.”

13. CATULUS admonished me not to slight the complaints of a friend, even tho’  
E they

they should prove to be without foundation, but endeavour to soothe and restore him to a right sense of my regard for him.

He also taught me to testify, on all occasions, the utmost reverence for the characters of my preceptors (as it is related of Domitius and Athenodorus); and likewise that I should always retain a sincere affection for my children.

14. I imitate my *kinsman* SEVERUS,\* in my love of my relations, my love of truth and of justice.

He also first brought me acquainted with the characters of those great men, Thraseas, Helvidius, Cato, Dion, and Brutus.†

He also gave me a true idea of a commonwealth, where all things were administered by *equal* laws and with an *equal* regard to the general interest; and also of a monarchy, where the liberty of the subject, was particularly consulted.

\* It is uncertain who this was, whom he calls "brother." It would not suit with the character of his brother by adoption. LUCIUS VERUS:—but see §. 17.

† Well-known characters.



From him I learned to pursue, without interruption and with constant attention, the study of philosophy; to exercise beneficence and liberality; to hope the best on all occasions; and never to suspect the affection or fidelity of my friends; yet without reserve to reprove those whose conduct required it. He was equally open and ingenuous with his friends, and never left them to the disagreeable necessity of guessing at what he wished them to do or forbear.

15. By CLAUDIUS MAXIMUS I was encouraged to be always master of myself, and never to be hurried away by any impetuous passion or desire; to keep up my spirits, whether in sickness or under any misfortune; to observe in my behaviour a proper mixture of dignity and condescension; to perform readily, and with a good grace, whatever I was convinced was necessary to be done.

This man had established such a character, and so far gained the good opinion of mankind, that whatever he *said*, they were convinced it was true, and whatever he

E 2

*did,*

*did*, that it was done with a good intention. He had such steadiness of mind, as never to be greatly struck either with admiration or with fear. He never acted either with precipitation, or in a dilatory manner. He never was perplexed or dejected on a disappointment, or elated with success; neither passionate nor suspicious; always ready to do a good office, and to forget an ill-natured one; with an inviolable regard to truth in all his actions. And these good qualities seemed rather the gift of nature, than the effect of study and cultivation. In short, there never was any one, who either thought himself slighted by him, or that presumed to think himself his superior.

He was no enemy to a delicate kind of raillery.\*

16. In my father† Antoninus Pius I observed a mild condescension; yet when, on due deliberation, he had adopted any mea-

\* I should prefer the usual reading to that adopted by Gataker; though he offers any *wager* on his reading: "Quovis pignore contendam."

† His father who adopted him.

sure, he pursued it with inflexible resolution. He was free from the least spark of vanity, and had a proper contempt for those honours which are so highly esteemed by the vulgar. He loved business, and was assiduous in transacting it. He listened with attention to those who had any thing to propose for the publick good.

He was inflexibly just in punishing or rewarding every one according to their respective deserts; for he had had sufficient experience to know the proper season either for severity or indulgence.

He had no favourites, or any licentious amours, being always intent on the good of the commonwealth.

He waved all ceremony with his friends, and left them entirely at their liberty to attend him at his palace or on his journeys; and if any affairs of their own made it inconvenient to follow the court, they found him precisely the same, nor ever lost his favour on that account.

In council, he scrutinized matters accurately, and with great patience and delibera-

tion; nor ever was satisfied with the first appearances, or obvious remarks, merely to put an end to the debate.

He was constant in his friendships, neither soon weary of the attachment, nor betraying any foolish fondness in the absence of his friends; being always happy in himself, chearful, and satisfied with the present, yet looking forwards, and providing against future events, even the most minute, but without anxiety or embarrassment.

He checked, as much as possible, all publick acclamations, and every degree of adulation. His treasury was always well supplied, by his wise œconomy, for the expences of government; for he was rather sparing of his private favours and of his publick largesses, despising the ridicule which he sometimes incurred for an appearance of parsimony.

In his worship of the Gods he was void of superstition; not courting the favour or applause of the people, but sober and reserved in these respects; neither too tenacious of trifling ceremonies, nor studious of innovation.

innovation. As for those things which conduce to the comfort and convenience of life, which fortune amply supplied, he made use of them, when at hand, without pride or ostentation; but, like a wise man, when at a distance, never regretted the want of them.

No one ever spoke of Antoninus as a mere Sophist, or as a mere wit,\* or as a pedant; but as a man of mature judgment, consummate wisdom, and as superior to flattery; a man, who had the command over himself, and was qualified to govern others.

Add to this, that he paid great regard to those who were real philosophers; and never reproached those who only affected that character.

In his address and intercourse with others he was easy, affable, and complaisant, but not fulsomely so.

He was careful of his person, but neither foppish† nor negligent; he had a proper

\* The original says “ *an home-born Slave,*” with whose saucy petulance their masters sometimes diverted themselves; like the fools in our old English families.

† ἢ πρὸς καλλωπισμον.



regard to his health, but not too anxious in that particular, like a man that was too fond of life; yet by his own care he so managed himself, as rarely to want any medical assistance.

But it was particularly meritorious in his exalted situation,‡ that, void of envy, he paid a due respect to those who were eminent for their abilities, either in oratory, the knowledge of the laws and customs, or any other accomplishment; and that he used his influence in recommending them to the favour of the publick, that they might receive the applause due to their respective deserts.

‡ The greatest men have been subject to this strange foible. The Emperor Hadrian is suspected to have contrived the death of some learned men, who unhappily eclipsed him in some art or science in which he was ambitious of excelling. Which gave occasion to that well-known sarcasm of the grammarian Favorinus, “That he would not dispute the propriety of a *phrase*, with a man that had thirty legions at his command.”

Cardinal Richelieu’s pique against Racine, on the success of the *Cid*, is equally notorious.

Though

Though he made it a point, in general, to act on all occasions agreeably to the customs of his ancestors; yet he did not appear to be biased by any such regards, or to lay much stress upon them. He was by no means of a fickle or restless disposition, but loved to go on in a regular course of affairs, without changing his place of residence on every occasion.†

After the most *acute fits* of the head-ach, he would come fresh and active to his usual train of business.

He had very few secrets, and those only secrets of state and relative to the common good.

He was very prudent and moderate in his exhibition of shews, and his publick edi-

† Seneca, whose works are a good comment on M. Antoninus, has an excellent epistle on this subject, “ Bonam spem de te concipio. Non discurre, nec locorum mutationibus inquietaris. Ægri animi ista jactatio est.”

“ I begin to conceive some hopes of you. Now you do not harass yourself with continually running about from place to place. That perpetual tossing about is the symptom of a sickly mind.”

EPIST. 2.

fices,



fices, largesses, and the like; having more regard to the reason and propriety, than the popularity of his actions.

He did not indulge himself in bathing at irregular hours, nor in a rage for building; nor was he solicitous about the elegance of his table,\* or the beauty or good person of his slaves,† or the fineness or colour of his cloaths. His gown indeed was home-spun, and generally brought from his own farm at Lanuvium. At his Tusculan villa he usually appeared in his tunick, and seldom put on a cloak without making an apology for it.‡ Such was his custom in this respect.

In short, in his whole behaviour, there was nothing morose, nor contrary to deco-

\* No dainty-mouthed eater.

J. THOMSON.

† Σώματων in this place certainly means *slaves*. Seneca says, “Transeo puerorum greges,” &c. and describes the care they took to have them all of the same age, and that a boy with *strait* hair might not be mixed with those that had *curled* locks &c.”

EP. 95.

‡ This passage is probably corrupted; but, as M. Casaubon observes, it contains nothing of philosophy or doctrine; it is therefore of no consequence,

rum;

rum; nothing precipitate or impetuous, or that had the appearance of extraordinary exertion, but every thing seemed to be dispatched at leisure and without confusion; and the administration was carried on with great order, force, and uniformity.

Upon the whole, what was said of Socrates is applicable to Antoninus, “that he could abstain from or enjoy those things, which the generality of people find it so difficult either to abstain from, or to enjoy with moderation.” But to be able to bear affliction with fortitude, (as he did the sickness of his friend Maximus) and the reverse with *sobriety* and without being too much elated, is an argument of consummate virtue and invincible resolution.

17. To the Gods my thanks are due, that I had an excellent grandfather, both by my father’s and mother’s side;\* excellent parents, a good sister, good preceptors, kind relations, faithful friends, and trusty domesticks; and, in short, for almost all the

\* Annus Verus and Calvisius Tullus.

blessings

blessings which life can afford; and that I have never done any thing inadvertently to offend them, though, from my natural disposition, *that* might probably have happened; but, by the favour of the Gods, things have been so disposed that nothing has occurred to betray my infirmity.

To their goodness I must likewise ascribe it, that I was not continued long under the care of my grandfather's concubine; and that I preserved my chastity pure and unfulled even beyond the maturity of manhood.\*

That I was bred under and subject to a father and prince, who was the most proper person in the world to extinguish every spark of pride in me, and to convince me by his example, that one may live with sufficient dignity in a court, without the parade of guards, embroidered robes, the sacred fire,§ images, and other ensigns of royalty; and

\* *Μη πρὸ ὥρας ἀνδροθῆναι*, “did not become a man before my time.”

§ Which was sometimes carried before the imperial family.

HERODIAN.

that

that a man may subdue the splendour of his figure to a level with that of a private man, and yet act with equal dignity and force, when the publick administration requires the majesty of the Sovereign.

To the favour of the Gods I am also indebted for a brother,\* whose manners excited me to be circumspect in my own conduct, and whose affection and regard might contribute to the pleasure of my life.

It is also a blessing, that my children were not born with any natural incapacity,† or with distorted limbs:

That I made no great progress in rhetoric or poetry, and those other superfluous studies, which might have engaged my attention too long, if I had been conscious of my being likely to prosecute them with success.

\* Though Lucius Verus, his brother by adoption, turned out luxurious and dissolute, he probably preserved a decent character during the life of Antoninus Pius, who adopted them. He was a man of parts, but voluptuous to the last degree.

† “ Heavy in their heads.”

COLLIER.

I am

I am happy also that I prevented the wishes of my preceptors, in establishing them in that respectable line which they seemed most to desire; and that I did not tantalize them with hopes, that because they were young enough to wait, I would provide for them hereafter:

That I enjoyed the friendship of those celebrated philosophers, Apollonius, Rusticus, and Maximus.

It is by the particular favour of the Gods, that I have formed a true idea of a life agreeable to nature, and that I have had it clearly and frequently impressed on my imagination; so that, considering the many divine impulses and inspirations, nothing could have prevented my living conformably to nature, but my own obstinacy, in entirely disregarding these divine admonitions and almost sensible instructions of heaven.

It is also a blessing, that in a life of so much toil and fatigue, my slender constitution has held out so well.

I am also very thankful, that I never had any connection\* with the celebrated Benedicta



dicta, or the infamous Theodotus; and that after some slight gallantries, I soon recovered my reason, and reformed.

I think myself happy likewise, that altho' I was sometimes unreasonably provoked at Rusticus, I never proceeded to any rudeness of which I might afterwards have repented.

That, although my mother was destined to an early death, I was blessed with her company all the latter years of her life.

That, whenever I wished to assist any one in necessity or in any other distress, I never was told that my *finances*† were exhausted; and that I myself never happened to be in a situation to want the assistance of any other person. I esteem it also a peculiar blessing, that I have a wife so obsequious,

\* Mr. James Thomson translates it, "carnal dealings with her." The Scotch translator has a more vulgar expression. J. Collier calls one "a famous wench," and Theodotus "a court catamite.

† J. Collier is so fond of *modernizing*, that he calls it his "exchequer and privy purse;" and often talks of the council-board, &c. I suspect indeed that Swift alludes in "the Bathos," to this translation, in his instances of the *pert style*: "M. Aurelius is excellent at snip-snap," &c.

so affectionate to me and my children, and so little fond† of the pomp and parade of life:

That I have met with proper preceptors for my children:

That remedies were pointed out to me in my dreams,\* for spitting of blood and for a giddiness in my head; as I remember was the case at Cajeta and at Chrysa:

And as I had a strong inclination to the study of philosophy, I think myself fortunate, not to have fallen into the hands of some Sophist, or to have wasted too much time in reading voluminous authors, or in the solution of syllogisms,‡ or in meteorology.

† By ἀφελῆ the Emperor probably meant “*chaste*,” integram; whether she was really so, “*ipse viderit*,” says Gataker, “it was his own affair.” He generally uses ἀπλοῦς for “*simple*.”

\* Galen, who was physician to M. Aurelius, laid (or pretended to lay) great stress upon dreams, (as Hippocrates did before him) and was not only determined to his profession by a dream of his father’s, but cured himself of a dangerous disease by a remedy prescribed to him by Æsculapius in a *dream*.

‡ Lucian ridicules the Stoics on this subject.

DIALOG. 8.

logical



logical disquisitions. Now all these blessings could never have been obtained without the particular favour and over-ruling providence of the Gods.

[Written in my expedition against the Quadi,  
on the Danube, near Bohemia.]

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

F

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK II.

---

§. 1. **C**ONSIDER with yourself, before you go out in the morning, that in the course of the day you will probably meet with some impertinent, disagreeable, or abusive fellow, with some deceitful, envious, or selfish wretch: now all this perverseness in them proceeds from their ignorance of what is really good or evil. But I, who have a more just idea of things, that nothing is good, but what is honourable, and nothing evil, but what is base; and am also sensible that the persons who offend me are in some sense allied to me, (I do not mean of the same flesh and blood, but that our souls are derived from, and particles of, the same divine nature) I can neither suffer any real injury from them, because they cannot

E 2.

compel

compel me to do a base action; nor can I be angry with or hate those\* whom I consider as of the same nature and the same family with myself. For we are all born for our mutual assistance; as the hands and feet, and every part of the human body, are for the service of the whole; to thwart and injure each other, therefore, is contrary to nature. Now injuries and hostilities are generally the consequence of hatred and resentment.

2. This whole person of mine, whatever I may think of it, consists only of a body, the vital spirit, and the rational soul or governing principle. Lay aside your books then, nor perplex yourself with fruitless disquisitions; but, as if you were on the verge of mortality, give yourself no concern about this body or material substance, which is a mass of putrefaction, consisting of a few bones, and a net-work or compli-

\* Seneca observes, that a wise man is not the *enemy* but the *instructor* of the wicked; and should treat them with the same tenderness as a physician does his patient.

De Ira, lib. ii.

cation

cation of nerves, veins, and arteries. Consider your vital spirit also; it is only a small portion of air, (and that not always the same) but every hour drawn in fresh, and again expelled by the action of the lungs. But the third part is the rational soul or governing principle—here make a pause! Consider you are an old man;\* suffer not this nobler part of your frame to be any longer enslaved to, or hurried away by, selfish passions; neither to murmur at your present fate, nor to shrink with apprehension from the future.

3. Those events, which depend on the Gods, confessedly display a providential

\* Si potes *subduc* te istis occupationibûs, sin minûs, eripe; fatis multum temporis sparsimus, incipiamus in senectute *vasa colligere*. In fretô vivimus, moriamur in portû.  
SEN. Ep. 19.

“ If you *can*, retire *by degrees*; if not, break off at once your engagements with the world; we have squandered away time enough in dissipation, let us in our old age *strike our tents* and be prepared to march. We have lived in a stormy sea, let us die in the harbour.” There is a confusion of metaphors, but the advice is important.

plan.

plan.† Even those which we ascribe to fortune or chance are subject to the laws of nature, and to that complicated series of things established by fate, and administered by Providence. From this source all things are derived. Indeed every thing is thus fixed and ordered, as necessary for the good of the whole, of which you are a part. Now that which conduces to the good of the whole system of nature, and to its preservation, must also be good to every part of the universe.

Yet this world itself subsists by continual changes, not only of the elements, but of those things which are composed of those elements, in a perpetual circle of successive generation and corruption.‡

† The Stoics talk of the Gods and a Providence; how consistently with their notions of a necessary series of events, see the preface. Though the good Emperor was certainly sincere in his belief of an intelligent and superintending First Cause.

‡ According to their philosophy, the elements in a continual rotation were changed, by condensation or rarefaction, into each other—air condensed becomes water; water, earth; &c.

Let

Let this then content you, and regulate your conduct by this principle, “that all human affairs are connected with the divine.”\* Do not indulge yourself in a thirst after books;† that you may die without murmuring, with resignation, and a cordial gratitude for the bounties of heaven.

4. Recollect how long you have deferred your most important concern, and how often you have neglected to make use of the opportunities afforded you by the Gods. It is time for you at length to consider your situation in this world,§ of which you are a part; and what the wise Governor of the

\* See b. iii. 13.

† *Distrahit animum librorum multitudo. Probato itaque semper lege; et si quando ad alios divertere liberit, ad priores redi.*

“A multitude of books distract the mind. Read therefore only approved authors; or if you have an inclination now and then to amuse yourself with variety, yet return still to the former.”

SEN. Ep. 2.

§ This is a favourite precept of the Stoics,

“*Quid sumus? quidnam victuri gignimur, &c.*”

PERS. Sat. 3.

world,



world, from whom you are derived, requires of you. That you have a fixed period assigned you, which if you do not improve to calm your passions and procure the tranquillity of your mind, it will be past, never to return, and you yourself will be no more.

3. Take care always to perform strenuously the business in hand, as becomes a man and a Roman, with attention and unaffected gravity, with humanity, liberality, and justice; and call off your thoughts, for the time, from every other object. This you will do, if you perform every action as if it were the last of your life; if you act without levity or dissimulation, free from selfishness and from every passion inimical to right reason; and lastly from peevishness and dissatisfaction at those events, which are necessarily connected with our lot.

You see how few things are necessary to an happy and almost godlike state of life. For the Gods will require nothing further from a man that is possessed of these essential qualifications.

6. Indeed,

6. Indeed,\* indeed, O my soul! you treat yourself ignominiously, and have lost the opportunity of retrieving your honour; for life flies on with a fatal speed, and yours is already almost elapsed; yet you pay no regard to your own sentiments, but suffer your happiness to be dependent on the opinion of other people.

7. Why do you suffer yourself thus to be the sport of accidents, and your mind distracted by external objects, and not give yourself leisure to acquire any useful knowledge?† and why do you live thus in a perpetual whirl of dissipation?

\* The true reading is certainly ὑπεριζεις, as M. Antoninus never deals in irony.

The reader will remember, that these Meditations are, in general, all addressed to himself, “Εἰς ἑαυτὸν;” but are useful hints to every man.

† Circumcidenda est hæc concursatio—domos, theatra, et fora percurfantium sine proposito vagantur; sicut fornicæ per arbuta repentes, &c.

“ We should check this rambling humour—running from house to house, to the theatres, the publick walks, &c. like ants on a mole-hill, &c.

SEN. de Tranquill. c. 12.

Similar

Similar to this is another mistake, which you must guard against. You see people busy in trifles, and fatiguing themselves with a variety of affairs, yet, like those who shoot at random, without any certain end or mark to which their thoughts or actions are directed.

8. You will hardly find any man unhappy from being ignorant of what passes in the thoughts of other people; but he that does not attend to the regulation of his own thoughts, must necessarily be miserable.

9. We ought frequently to reflect on the nature of the universe, and on our own natures; and what that *whole* is of which we are a part, and how the latter is regulated with regard to the former.

We ought further to reflect, that nothing can prevent us from acting and speaking agreeably to that universal nature, of which we are a part.

10. Theophrastus speaks like a philosopher, when in comparing one offence with another (for in a popular\* sense that may be

\* This alludes to the stoical paradox, "that all sins are equal."

See the Preface.

done)

done) he says, that those sins which are committed through sensual *desire*, are more heinous than those which proceed from the passion of *anger*. For a man in a passion appears to deviate from right reason with a degree of pain, from a secret and sudden impulse of the mind, before he is aware. But he that offends from sensual desire, being subdued by pleasure, betrays a more licentious turn and effeminacy in his vices.

Very justly therefore, and as becomes a philosopher, does Theophrastus pronounce thus on the two offenders; for the former seems to be an injured person, and is provoked to anger; the latter offends voluntarily, and is guilty of a crime to gratify an impetuous and brutish appetite.

II. Regulate all your thoughts and actions, as if you were instantly departing from the land of the living. Not that there is any thing terrible in death, if there are any Gods presiding over this world; for they will not suffer you to be exposed to any injury; and if there are no Gods, or if they are regardless of human affairs, who  
would

would wish to live in a world destitute of a God and of a superintending providence? But there indisputably are Gods, who have a constant regard to the affairs of men; and they have put it entirely in the power of every man, not to fall into any real calamity.\* And if there were any real evil in the common events of life, they would have guarded against that also, and have given us the power to avoid it.

But indeed how can those things, which do not make a man the worse, make his life worse or less happy? For the Universal Nature or First Cause would, neither through ignorance, or want of power† or want of skill to prevent or correct what was wrong, be guilty of such an error, as to suffer good

\* Because the Stoics account nothing a calamity, but doing a wicked action, which no one can be compelled to do; the reader must always keep in mind the distinction between *natural* and *moral* evil—sickness, for instance, and vice.

† M. Aurelius takes the liberty to dissent from his stoical master in this instance; who thought the Deity would never suffer this, if he had the *power* to prevent it.

and



and evil to fall promiscuously and in equal proportion to the good and to the bad. Now life and death, glory and obscurity, pain and pleasure, riches and poverty, all these things are equally the lot of the virtuous and of the wicked; and being intrinsically neither honourable nor base, are consequently neither good nor evil.

12. How rapidly do all mortal things vanish and disappear! The things themselves absorbed into the immensity of the universe, and the memory of them, by the lapse of time, sunk in oblivion. Thus it is with every object of our senses, especially those which tempt us with an appearance of pleasure, or terrify us with an apprehension of pain, or dazzle us with their pomp and celebrity. How worthless and contemptible! how fordid, how transient, and subject to decay, are these things, and even how little better than a lifeless carcass!

An intelligent man will easily form a judgment of those people, whose opinions and bold decisions stamp a value on these things, and give them a currency with the vulgar.

What



What is it to die? If we view it in itself,\* and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of nature; but it is a childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay, it is not only the *work* of nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change.†

Finally, a wise man should consider, how *man* is connected with the *Deity*, and which part of him is thus connected; and how that rational part of his being will be disposed of when separated from the body.‡

\* Seneca personifies death, and treats him very cavalierly: “Tolle istam pompam, sub quâ lates et stultos territas; Mors es; quam nuper servus meus, quam ancilla contempsit.”

“Away with that pomp under which thou concealest thyself to frighten fools—I know thee, thou art only Death! which my slave, nay, my poor servant-girl, despised.” But, as Dr. Johnson observes, “Courage is ridiculous, when courage can be of no use.” None but a Christian can rationally say, *πᾶ σὺ, θάνατε, τὸ κενὸν*; O death, where is thy sting?

† See above, §. 3.

‡ The original here is very ambiguous.

13. Nothing

13. Nothing can be more miserable, than a man who from an idle curiosity strolls about, “*prying into the very bowels of the earth*,” as the poet\* says; and endeavouring by conjecture to penetrate into the secret thoughts of other people, insensible that his own *mental faculties*† afford ample room for cultivation and improvement. Now this improvement he will effect, by preserving his mind free from every passion and perturbation, and from vainly tormenting himself about the events which come to pass, either by the will of the Gods, or by the agency of men.

For whatever is ordained by the Gods must demand our reverence for its excellence; and of the actions of men we should judge favourably on account of the relation which they bear to us. And they are frequently entitled to our compassion from

\* Pindar quoted by Plato.

GATAKER.

† He calls it the *dæmon* within us, according to the Platonic doctrine, as well as the Stoic. Seneca says, “*Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet; hic prout a nobis tractatur, ita nos ipse tractat.*”

Ep. 21.

their

their ignorance of the true nature of good and evil.\* Which moral blindness is not a less misfortune, than that of a man really blind, which prevents him from distinguishing black from white.

14. Although you should live three thousand or three myriads of years, yet observe, that no man when he dies loses any more than that instant portion of time which he then lived; and that he only lives that moment of life which he is constantly losing; so that the longest and the shortest life, in this view, come to the same thing.† For the present time is equal to every one, though that which is past may have been unequal.

But, that the portion of life which we lose at our death is a mere point or instant, appears from hence, that no one can lose either what is past or what is future. For how can he lose what he is not now possessed of?

\* Above, §. 1.

† This conceit was a common topic of consolation, such as it is, among the Stoics of that age.

See SENECA Nat. Quæst. 1. 6.

These

These two things then it may be worth while to attend to; first, that as the course of nature has been the same from all eternity, and every thing comes round in a circle; whether we behold this same scene for one hundred or one hundred thousand years; it comes to much the same thing.

The other observation I have already made, that he who lives the longest; and he who dies the earliest, when they *do* die, their loss is equal. For they are only deprived of the present moment, which is all they have to lose.\*

15. Every thing depends on opinion†; (as Monimus the Cynic observed.) This maxim may be useful in some respects, if we only apply what he spoke somewhat plausibly, where truth will warrant the application.

\* Ridiculous as this quibble is, opinions not less absurd, in almost every science, have passed unexamined from generation to generation.

† “ Πάντα ὑπολήψεις.” This is Lord Shaftsbury’s motto, which he descants upon vol. ii. p. 437. “ All good is as we fancy it, and opinion is all in all.”

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16. There

16. There are various ways by which the mind of man debases itself; particularly, when, by repining at those events which happen in the course of nature, he becomes a mere abscess or an useless excrescence in that universal system of which he is a part, and in which every individual is comprehended.

Again; When we take an aversion to any one, and thwart him on every occasion, with an intention to do him some injury; which is generally the case with people that indulge their resentment.

Thirdly; A man evidently debases himself, when he becomes a slave to pleasure, or is subdued by pain.

Fourthly; When he acts with dissimulation or fraud, or does or says any thing contrary to truth.

Lastly; When a man acts without thought or design, and exerts himself at random, without any regard to the consequence; whereas every the most minute action ought to be directed to some end or useful purpose. Now the chief end of every  
rational



rational being, is to be governed by the laws of the universe, the oldest and most venerable of all communities.

17. The whole period of human life is a mere point; our being frail and transient, our perception obscure, the whole frame of our body tending to putrefaction. The soul itself is the sport of passions. The freaks of fortune not subject to calculation or conjecture, fame is undistinguishing and capricious: In a word, every thing relating to our body is fleeting, and glides away like a stream, and the reveries of the soul are a vapour and a dream. Indeed, life itself is a continual warfare, and a pilgrimage in a strange country; and posthumous fame is near akin to oblivion.

What then can conduct us safely on this journey of life? Nothing but true wisdom or philosophy. Now this consists in cultivating and preserving from injury and disgrace that good genius\* within us, our soul, undisturbed and superior to pleasure and

\* Thus they often speak of the rational soul.



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\* Thus they often speak of the rational soul.

pain, not acting at random\* or doing any thing in vain, or with falshood and diffimulation; to do or leave undone whatever we please, without being influenced by the will or the opinion of other men.

Moreover, to acquiesce in whatever comes to pass, either by accident or the decrees of fate, as proceeding from the same cause whence we ourselves are derived.

On the whole, philosophy will teach us to wait for death with calmness and equanimity, as being no more than the dissolution of those elements of which every animal is composed. Now if no damage accrues to those several elements, in their continual changes or migrations from one body to another, why should any one be apprehensive of any injury from the change of the whole? It is agreeable to the course of nature; but what is such cannot be evil.

[Written at Carnuntum, a city in Pannonia, now part of Hungary.]

\* The repetition of this and many other sentiments in this work, tho' Casaubon excuses it as inculcating what cannot be too often repeated, yet it certainly proves, that it was not intended for the publick in this incorrect state.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK III.

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§. 1. **I**T is of importance to reflect, not only that our life is continually wearing away, and that every day a still smaller portion of it remains; but likewise that, although it should be prolonged to a more distant period, it is yet uncertain, whether the same vigour of understanding will be afforded us, to comprehend and transact the common affairs of life, or to contemplate accurately the nature of things human and divine. For suppose a man should be reduced to a state of dotage and mental imbecillity, he may still discharge the animal functions; he may breathe, be nourished, have the power of perception, retain his appetite and other faculties of that kind; but to make a proper use of his higher powers,

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powers, to adjust the measures of duty, to reduce his ideas to any regular order, and to determine when it is time for him to leave the world,\* and whatever of this kind requires the use of a cultivated mind; all these things must then be extinguished for ever.

We ought therefore to be expeditious in our affairs, not only because we approach daily nearer to our end, but also because our intellects and our comprehension of things may cease before the termination of our lives.

2. This also is worthy of observation, that there are many accidental circumstances attending the productions of nature, which are not without their beauty and attraction.†

\* The better sort of Stoics allowed of a voluntary death only on very urgent and important occasions; “For our country, our friends, *intolerable pain, incurable diseases, &c.*” They often, however, mistook the case, and misapplied their doctrine. See the Preface.

† This is a very extraordinary section. M. Aurelius seems to have viewed things in a peculiar light, and with the eyes of a painter, (which art he had learned of Diogenetus) and sees beauties in objects that escape the notice of common observers.

Even



Even in the works of art. (to instance in a familiar operation) there are often, contrary to the intention of the baker, little cracks or irregularities in the surface of a loaf of bread; which have something agreeable in them, and which, in a peculiar manner, excite the appetite. Thus figs, when they are thoroughly ripe, open and discover their richness. Olives also, when they are ready to fall of themselves and are almost decayed, have a particularly beautiful appearance.

In like manner the bending down of full ears of corn, the fierce brows of the lion, the foam dropping from the jaws of a wild boar, and many other things of this kind, which are far from having any beauty in themselves; yet, if we consider them as concomitants of the productions of nature, are interesting and ornamental.

He then, who has a taste for these speculations, and a capacity to penetrate more deeply into the works of nature, will discover that there is hardly any thing, which, considered in that light, does not form a beautiful harmony and connection with the whole,



whole. Such a one will behold, for instance, the extended jaws of savage beasts with no less pleasure in real life,\* than when represented by the most skilful statuary or painter. Even the marks of mature old age in man or woman, and the tempting bloom of youth, will afford equal pleasure to a discerning spectator of this turn.

There are other things of the like kind which have no charms to vulgar eyes, and are only discernible by those who are familiar with the works of nature, and view them with taste and intelligence.

3. Hippocrates, after having cured innumerable diseases, was himself at length cut off by a disease. The Chaldeans undertook to foretell the death of others, but were themselves obliged to submit to fate. Alexander, Pompey, and Caius† Cæsar, who laid waste so many cities, and destroyed so many myriads of horse and foot in the

\* Mr. Burke's remarks on "Terror" may be here consulted.

"Sublime &c." p. 2. §. 2.

† Julius Cæsar, generally called by his prænomen Caius in old authors.

field of battle, were themselves forced to quit the field of life at last.

Heraclitus, who has discoursed so philosophically on the world's being destroyed by fire, was himself destroyed by a contrary element and died of a dropfy. Democritus was devoured by vermin; Socrates fell a victim to a worse kind of vermin, his false accusers.

But to what are all these instances applied? Why, you have gone a-board, you have set sail, performed your voyage; disembark then, and go on shore. And if you are destined to another state of existence, you will find no place destitute of the care of Providence. But if all sensation is to cease, you will no longer be to struggle either against pain or pleasure; nor be a slave to this vile body. For at present the soul, which is all intelligence and a portion of the divinity, is in subjection to what is mere dust and putrefaction.

4. Do not squander what remains of your life in busy enquiries after the conduct of other people; unless it has any reference to the  
good

good of the community. For this will only detain you from more useful pursuits. Do not, for instance, be solicitous to know what such a man is about, or for what reason he acts thus; what he says, or what are his sentiments, or what project he has in hand; nor, in short, any thing that may divert your attention from your own rational conduct. In the series of your meditations, therefore, let every thing useless or superfluous be avoided; especially whatever has the least appearance of a malignant or impertinent curiosity.

Indeed you should regulate your thoughts in such a manner, that if any one should ask you, on a sudden, what is the subject of them, you may answer him without embarrassment; so that they may evidently appear to be all simplicity and benevolence, and such as become a being born for society; free from every idea of sensuality or lasciviousness; from rancour, envy, or suspicion; or from any other sentiment, which, if you were to confess it, would occasion a blush.

A man

A man thus disposed may claim the first rank amongst mortals; being in some measure a kind of priest or substitute of the Gods themselves, and under the particular protection of the genius within him; who preserves him untainted by pleasure, invulnerable by pain, void of every licentious and every malicious propensity.

Thus he contends for the noblest prize, and stands firm and invincible by any weak passion; and being deeply fraught with just sentiments, he lives entirely satisfied with every event that comes to pass, and is allotted him by fate.

He rarely, and (as I observed before) never without reference to the good of the community, interferes in other people's concerns;\* confining his whole attention to his own moral improvement, yet considering the duties which arise from his connec-

\* In opposition to this sentiment, Gataker quotes St. Chrysostom; and Tully says, many people, either from attention to their own interest or from misanthropy, under a pretence of minding their own business, are really guilty of injustice.

Off. b. i. §. 9.

tion with the universal system of nature, as the first and most sacred obligations. For that which is allotted to every one by fate, is intended to conduce to the happiness of the whole and of every individual.\*

He likewise reflects that all rational beings are in some sense allied to each other; and that kindness and *humanity* to our fellow creatures are essential to the nature of man.

However, that the good opinion of every one, indiscriminately, is not worth our attention, but only of those who live in a manner that becomes the dignity of their nature.

As for the herd of mankind, he is too well acquainted with their conduct both in private and in publick; their infamous connections, the dissipation of their days and the revels of their nights. He cannot therefore be very ambitious of the praise or approbation of such capricious people, who are often at a loss to please themselves.

\* I have endeavoured to *guess* at the sense of this passage; though the text seems corrupted, and Gataker and M. Casaubon seem much puzzled to explain it.



5. Never go with reluctance to discharge your duty; nor ever act without a regard to the common good; nor till you have carefully investigated the matter in hand; nor ever in opposition to better judgments.

Never aim at setting off your sentiments with affected elegance, nor use too many words on any occasion; nor indeed be ambitious of engaging in a multiplicity of affairs.

Take care that the good genius\* which presides in your bosom may be pleased with his charge; when you act with a manly fortitude, as becomes a man *advanced in years*, as a citizen and a Roman, and as a sovereign prince,† who conducts himself as one always prepared to quit the field on the first “sounding of the retreat;” who maintains such a character for probity as to render oaths or vouchers unnecessary to the truth of his assertions. But this circumstance is *particu-*

\* The Platonists, as well as the Stoics, speak of the daemon or divinity that presides in the soul.

† From this and various other expressions, it is evident that the Emperor intended these *Maxims* and *Resolves* for regulating his own conduct.



*larly honourable*‡ to a wise man, that he wants not the assistance of others; nor depends for his happiness and tranquillity on the opinion of mankind.

We should endeavour therefore to be habitually upright; and have if possible no errors to be corrected.

6. If you have discovered any thing in human life preferable to truth, justice, temperance, or fortitude; in short, any thing more excellent than a mind satisfied with itself, and sufficient to its own happiness; and whilst it acts conformably to right reason, acquiesces in whatever, without its own choice, is allotted it by fate;—if, I say, you have discovered any thing superior to these virtues, pursue it with your utmost effort, and enjoy your discovery.

But if nothing can be conceived more excellent than, by the assistance of the good genius that presides within you, to have subdued your appetites, to have examined every appearance by the rules of reason, and

‡ So M. Casaubon understands it.

(as Socrates used to say) “to have withdrawn and abstracted your mind from the impressions of sense;” to have submitted yourself to the care of the Gods, and to have studied the welfare of mankind; if you think every thing of less importance, and contemptible in comparison with these things, never bestow a thought upon any other object, which, by diverting your attention, may prevent you from pursuing your chief good without distraction. For it is a kind of rebellion against the sovereignty of reason, to suffer any thing foreign to incroach on her province. Such, for instance, as popular applause, the love of power or wealth, or sensual pleasure: If any of these are admitted, for a moment, they will soon gain the ascendant, and lead you captive.

But do you, I say, freely and unequivocally make your choice, and give the preference to what is most excellent, and firmly adhere to it. Now that is most excellent which is most advantageous; I mean advantageous to you as a rational creature; and this you must readily embrace. But if  
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it be only so to the animal or sensual part of you, by all means reject it. And that you may investigate the truth in this case with the more safety; suffer not your judgment to be biased by any external and plausible appearance with which it is surrounded.

7. Never adopt any measure as conducing to your interest, which lays you under a necessity of violating your honour or your modesty; or may excite your hatred or your suspicion, or provoke you to execrate any one, or to practise dissimulation; or, in short, to entertain a wish which will not bear the light, but must be concealed from the world by walls and curtains. For he who pays the principal regard to his own conscience and the good genius within him, and to the sacred rights of virtue; you will never hear such a one utter tragical complaints,\* or pathetically lamenting his hard fate, or wishing to fly to solitude to indulge, or to

\* The original is, “will not furnish a subject for tragedy;” as Epictetus says, “What is tragedy, but a representation of the unrestrained passions of men expressed in verse? &c.”

company to soothe, his melancholy; and, what is of most consequence, he will live in such a manner as neither to court death, nor to flee from it with terror, being absolutely indifferent how long or how short a space of time his vital spirit is to be confined to its body; and if he were to depart this instant, he is prepared for his dissolution, and ready to execute with decency and submission whatever other functions may be allotted him; having through life made it his study religiously to observe and practise the duties of a rational creature and one born for society.

8. In a mind properly cultivated, and purified by the precepts of philosophy, you will discover no symptom of vice or impurity, nothing unsound under a specious appearance. Death can never surprize such a one in an imperfect state, before he has completed his moral character; nor can we say of him, as of an actor, that he has quitted the stage before the tragedy is finished. For in such a one, there is nothing remains of servility or of ostentation, nothing embarrassed,

raised, nothing *selfish*; nothing but what shews an independent spirit, and a freedom from every thing artful and disengenuous.\*

9. Pay a reverential regard to that faculty by which you form your opinions; for every thing depends upon this, that no opinion be fostered in your breast that is not consonant to nature and to the condition of a rational being: but reason and nature require that we never act precipitately or at random, that we act with benevolence to mankind, and with submission to the Gods.

10. Without perplexing yourself with a multiplicity of precepts, therefore, let those few above-mentioned be retained in your mind. Recollect, moreover, what I have formerly remarked,† “that every one lives that moment only which is now present.” For the rest of his life is either already past, or is wrapt in uncertainty.

\* Gataker quotes Tertullian on this passage:

‘Nihil veritas erubescit, nisi abscondi.’ Truth blushes at nothing but being concealed.

† See this conceit, b. ii. §. 14.



The life of every one, therefore, is evidently a mere point of time. This world indeed in which we live is but a mere corner of the universe, and the most extensive posthumous fame a very trifling affair; and is to pass through a succession of insignificant mortals, who know little of themselves, and much less therefore of those who have long submitted to their destiny.

11. To the precepts already given, let the following be added:—To define or form a clear description of every object which presents itself to the imagination; that you may see distinctly, what is its real nature, when viewed in itself, stripped of every adventitious circumstance; to discover by what *name* it ought to be distinguished, and the true names to be fixed to those ideas of which it is composed, and into which it is to be resolved.\* For nothing can contribute more to exalt the mind to its proper pitch of greatness than to be able to examine, and see in its

\* The Stoics are very fond of subtle disquisitions of this kind.



proper light, every incident that befalls us in the course of our lives, and to have them always in our view, so as to distinguish to what part or description of mankind such incidents may be deemed useful, and in what manner; what importance it may be of to the universe in general, and to man in particular, as a citizen of that great metropolis, of which other cities are no more than private families.

I must examine then of what nature every object is, which is presented to my contemplation, of what parts it is composed, and how long it is calculated to endure; what particular virtues every incident is intended to call forth, whether clemency or fortitude, truth, fidelity, integrity, or contentment, and the like.

On every incident, good or bad, a man should be able to pronounce on the probable cause: “This proceeds from the will of the Gods;” this was the effect of that connected series of events established by fate;\* this of a fortuitous concurrence of

\* See the Preface.

various circumstances. Some disagreeable incident was brought upon me, perhaps, by one of the same tribe, the same city, or even of the same family, ignorant probably of that relation which subsists between all animated beings. But I, who am not ignorant of it, will treat him, according to the laws of that community, with justice and benevolence.

As to things indifferent,\* or of a middle nature, as far as I can form a conjecture of the estimation in which they ought to be held, I will act accordingly.

12. If, in conformity to right reason, you transact whatever affairs you have in hand with attention, steadiness, and benevolence, and without suffering any thing foreign to your present purpose to interfere, you pay the same deference to the divine monitor within you, as if you were the next moment to part for ever; if you can thus persevere,

\* Though the Stoics thought every thing "indifferent" except the *το καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν*, virtue and honour; they allowed the goods of fortune, &c. to be *useful*, tho not *necessary*.

inattentive to any thing further, and without shrinking from any difficulty, and act with simplicity and energy, according to the nature of the present business, with an *heroic* regard to truth in all your words; you will thus secure an happy life.

Now it is not in the power of any one to prevent your acting thus.

13. As medical operators\* have their several instruments always ready at hand for sudden and unexpected accidents and operations, so should you be furnished with certain maxims and principles, by which you may distinguish the nature and connection between things human and divine; and act, upon the most trifling occasion, as one convinced of such a connection. For you will never act properly with regard to men,

\* Every one knows that physick and chirurgery were for many ages practised by the same persons amongst the ancients, and the art was held in great estimation.

Ἰητὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀνιάξιος ἀνδρῶν.

Hom. Il. 11.

“One medical man is worth one hundred common men.”

See POPE'S note on Machaon, Il. 11.

without

without considering the relation they bear to the Gods: and the reverse of this is true.

14. Do not suffer yourself any longer to deviate from the right path of life. You were born to *live* as well as to *read*. You will hardly have time to peruse your own little *Commentaries*† in your journal or memorandum book, much less to read all the exploits of the ancient Greeks and Romans; and your extracts which you have made from other authors for your conduct and amusement in your old age. Make all possible speed then to the chief end of all instruction; and without hopes of any further external aid, rely on your own resolution, if you have any regard to your own happiness;‡ which  
those

† As most of these precepts are addressed to himself, it appears probable, that the Emperor alludes to some “*Commentaries*,” which he is supposed to have written of his own life; and the modest title which he gives them, ὑπομνηματῖα, “little Commentaries,” makes this the more plausible.

‡ I have followed Gataker’s opinion, in not separating this from the former section; chiefly as it seems consonant to Seneca’s sentiments.

Grammaticus

may do who are no critics in language, and who do not know all the grammatical or logical signification of words, and in how many senses, for instance, “to steal, to sow, to buy, to rest,” may be taken, and the like.

The knowledge of our duty indeed is not the object of sight or any external sense, but of the eye of the mind or our mental faculties.

15. Man consists of a body, a soul or vital spirit, and the mind or intellectual faculty. To the body belong sensations; to the soul or vital spirit, appetites and passions; and rational principles to the intellectual faculty or mind.

Now, to receive the impression of objects on the senses, is common to us with other

Grammaticus circa curam sermonis versatur; et si latius evagari vult circa *historias*; jam, ut longissimè fines suos proferat, circa carmina. Quid horum ad virtutem viam sternit?

SEN. Ep. 45.

“The grammarian’s chief attention is confined to style and expression; or, if he takes a little wider compass, it extends to history; but suppose he proceeds to his utmost limits, the structure of a poem and the modulation of verse; what tendency has any thing of this kind to smooth the road to virtue?

animals



animals of every kind; to be forcibly hurried away by the mechanical impulse of our appetites and passions, is the property of brute creatures and beasts of prey; of debauchees and tyrants, of a Phalaris\* or a Nero. And even atheists and traitors to their country, and those who in *private* will commit every thing base and detestable, may yet be guided, by the mind or rational faculty, to perform such plausible duties as may gain them popularity amongst the vulgar.

If all other human actions, therefore, like those which I have mentioned, are common to all mankind, what peculiar distinction remains for a wise and good man, but to be easy and contented under every event of human life, and the decrees of fate? Not to offend the divine principle that resides in his soul, nor disturb the tranquillity of his mind by a variety of fantastical pursuits; but to keep himself calm, and follow with decency the dictates of his heavenly monitor,

\* The tyrant of Sicily.



To observe a strict regard to truth in his words, and justice in his actions; and though all mankind should conspire to question his integrity and his modesty, and even dispute with him his own feelings and his pretensions to happiness; he is not offended at their incredulity, nor yet deviates from the path which leads him properly to the true end of life; at which every one should endeavour to arrive with a clear conscience, undaunted and prepared for his dissolution, resigned to his fate without murmuring or reluctance.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK IV.

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§. 1. **W**HEN the mind or ruling principle is properly regulated, it can with ease and at any time adapt itself to the various events of life, which are presented to it for the subject of its operations. For it is not particularly attached to any one subject or mode of action. It exerts itself with a preference indeed on things more agreeable, but with a *reserve*\* of acquiescence; and if chance throw any thing of a contrary qua-

\* “*With a reserve.*” This was a *salvo*, which the Stoics sometimes found it necessary to make use of. Thus Seneca says, “Nothing can happen contrary to the expectation of a wise man—because he foresaw that something *might* intervene to prevent his designs.” What they meant seems no more, than that, in spite of fortune, their resignation and patience would make them happy.

See B. v. §. 18.

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lity in its way, it takes that for the subject of its philosophy to work upon;\* which, like a strong fire, converts and assimilates that to its own substance, which would extinguish a slight flame, triumphs over all resistance, and becomes more brilliant by this addition of combustible matter.

2. Never act at random on the most trifling occasion, nor contrary to the speculative principles of that art, which tends to the perfecting of human life.

3. Men are continually in search of some sequestered retreat, some villa on the seashore, or on some airy mountain.† And you, my friend, were formerly very much attached to retirement. But this is evidently

\* Seneca and Marcus Antoninus frequently illustrate each other;—“Non sapientem *casibus* hominum excipimus, sed *erroribus*.” De Tranquil. c. 13, &c.

“Our wise man is not exempted from the common *accidents* of men, but from their *errors*,” (in their behaviour under them) &c.

† Seneca is perpetually inveighing against the luxury of the Romans in this respect; “Nullus est locus, cui non villarum vestrarum fastigia immincant, nullum flumen,

dently a mere vulgar conception of things. You have it in your power, at any time and in any place, to retire into yourself; and where can a man find a more peaceful or more undisturbed repose than in his own soul? especially one, who, when he looks into his own breast, finds nothing there but a perfect calm; such a calm I mean as arises from order and well-regulated passions and affections.

To this kind of retirement then you should continually have recourse, and renew and invigorate your virtuous resolutions.

But you should also furnish yourself with some short elementary principles, which you may always have ready at hand, to banish every uneasy reflection, and send you back to the world prepared against and superior to every vexatious occurrence.

men, littus, mons. Ubicunque scatebunt *aquarum calentium* venæ, ibi nova diversoria luxuriæ excitabuntur."

Ep. 89.

"There is no lake, river, shore, or mountain, where your villas do not erect their lofty tops. Wherever veins of warm water abound, new *lodging-houses* will be immediately built to gratify your luxury," &c.

For

For what is it that provokes you? The malignity of mankind perhaps; because you forget your maxim, “That all rational beings were made for their mutual comfort, and that to bear with the infirmities of each other is an important part of justice;” and moreover, that they who offend you, do it through ignorance, and therefore would not do it, if they were better informed.

And how many wretched mortals have we seen carried to their graves, and now mouldered into dust, amidst their furious animosities, suspicions, and even hostile attacks on each other’s persons, which terminated but with their lives. A truce then with your resentment! nor torment yourself thus to no purpose.

But you are out of humour, perhaps, and dissatisfied with the general administration of the world and your own destiny:—What! when you recollect this disjunctive proposition, “That the world is governed either by a wise Providence, or by a fortuitous concourse of atoms!” And in either case it is to be considered as one great city; and

no individual citizen can complain of what is for the good of the whole; as it has often been proved.

But perhaps you are afflicted with some bodily pain, or ill health; yet consider that the mind, when she retires into herself, and surveys her own privilege, is no way concerned in those commotions, whether pleasing or disagreeable, which are raised in the animal system. Add to this, those maxims which have often been inculcated to you, concerning pleasure and pain, and to which you have unequivocally assented, and be content.

But lastly, can you be solicitous about your slender share of fame, when you reflect with what a fatal speed all things are tending to oblivion, to that immense chaos of infinite duration, past and to come? Consider also the emptiness and vanity of applause, and how undistinguishing is the judgement of those who are to bestow it, and to what narrow limits it is confined. For this whole globe is, comparatively, but a mere point, and how small a portion of it is inhabited!

and



and of these inhabitants, how small a number of them, and how contemptible a set of creatures they are, upon whom you must be dependant for your applause!

Remember therefore to retire into this little recess in your own bosom; and above all things, do not distract your thoughts, nor be too intent on any worldly pursuit, but preserve your freedom, and consider things as a man of spirit, as a member of society, as a creature destined to mortality.

But amongst those maxims, which ought always to be present to your view, these two are not the least important:

First, That the external objects themselves cannot reach the mind, but remain inoffensive and at a distance. It is our *opinion* of things that raises all the storms and tumults in our breasts.

The other infallible truth is, that this whole scene of things which we now behold will very shortly be shifted and exist no more. And indeed you should bear in mind, how many changes you yourself have already been witness to. The universe subsists by  
perpetual

perpetual changes,\* and the happiness of life itself depends on opinion.

4. If the intellectual faculty be common to all mankind, then reason, from which we are denominated rational creatures, must be common likewise: and, if so, we must all have the same principle of action and the same law. If this be granted, we are all fellow-citizens of the same commonwealth, and of course the whole universe is one body politick. For what other community is there of which the whole race of mankind can be supposed to partake? Does it then proceed from our being members of this community, that we are partakers of intellect, of reason, of law? or from what other cause? For, as the earthy particles of my body are imparted to me from the earth, and the watery, the aërial, and the fiery particles are derived from their respective elements, (for nothing which now exists

\* Literally, “The universe is change; and life, opinion.” An unauthorised sentiment of some sceptick, and adopted by Lord Shaftsbury.

See b. 2. §. 15.

can proceed from nothing, nor be resolved into non-existence) so likewise the intellectual faculty must proceed from some other cause of its own kind.\*

5. Our death and our birth are equally the mysterious work of nature. Death is the dissolution of those elements which at our birth composed our frame. There is nothing in this affair which we need be ashamed of; as there is nothing in it repugnant to the nature of an intellectual being, nor any thing but what is the result of his structure and constitution.

6. Such behaviour from such particular characters is in some measure *necessary*; and he that is dissatisfied with this may as well expect the fig-tree to be free from acrid juice.† But by all means reflect, that both

\* The reader, who finds no pleasure or improvement in this and the like subtle reasoning, has an easy remedy in omitting it.

† Nemo naturæ sanus irascitur. Quis enim mirari velit non in sylvestribus dumis poma pendere?

SEN. de Irâ, l. 2.

“No one in his senses is angry with the constitution of nature. Who would be surprised that he found no grapes on a hawthorn-bush?

you and the person, whoever he is, that offends you, will in a very short time be no more, nor will your very names long survive you.\*

7. Rectify your opinion of the matter, and do not suppose yourself injured, and your complaint will cease:—And if you can find nothing to complain of, there is no harm done.

8. That which does not make a man morally worse, cannot make his life less happy, nor injure him in any respect. It is necessary for the good of the world that it should be so.

9. That whatever comes to pass is for the best; if you accurately examine it, you

\* Seneca says many fine things on the subject, which, though somewhat trite, cannot be too freely inculcated: “*Jam istas inimicitias quas implacabili gerimus odiô, febris aut aliud malum corporis, vetabit geri. Jam par acerrimum media mors dirimet.*” De Irâ l. iii. 42.

“A fever, or some other malady, will soon put an end to those quarrels which we carry on with such implacable animosity. Death, at least, will soon part the most furious *combatants*.”

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will be convinced that it is so: And this, not only from the necessary series of events established by fate, but from the just administration of an intelligent cause,† who dispenses his allotments in proportion to men's deserts. Go on then as you have begun, and proceed upon this principle as becomes a good man, (a good man, I mean, in the proper philosophical sense) and have regard to this in all your actions.

10. Do not regulate your opinion by the caprice of a man that treats you contemptuously and would force you to adopt his own ideas; but examine things carefully, and decide according to truth.

11. You should have these two maxims always ready at hand. First, to do only what the sovereign legislative faculty within you suggests for the benefit of mankind; and secondly, to alter your measures, whenever any friend is at hand capable of advising you and correcting any wrong opinion. I mean always, if this appears to be done on a probability of its being just and likely

† See the Preface.

to contribute to the good of the publick: for it ought to be from some motive of this kind, and not merely because it is more agreeable or more soothing to your vanity.

12. Are you endowed with reason? you will undoubtedly answer in the affirmative. Why then do you not make use of it? For if your reason does its part, what further can you require?

13. You have subsisted as a distinct part of the universe; but you will in a short time disappear, and return to that general mass from whence you were produced, or rather be again returned into that prolifick soul of the world from which you were derived.\*

In your oblations at the altar, one grain of frankincense may fall in and be consumed before another, but the distance of time is inconsiderable.†

14. Persevere in acting agreeably to the principles and sacred truths of reason, and

\* Of the stoical doctrine on this head, see Preface.

† The application of this to the unequal length of human life is obvious.

in *ten* days you will be revered as a God,† by those who now think you a *fool* and a madman for any singularities which your philosophy may exact from you.

15. Do not form your plan of life as if you had a thousand years to live. Death is at hand; but live a good life while you do live and it is in your power.

16. How much time and leisure does that man gain, who is not curious to enquire what his neighbours say, or do, or think, but confines his whole attention to his own conduct, and is only solicitous to preserve that just and irreproachable, according to Agathon; without looking about to find blots in the characters of other people, he pursues the direct line of duty, and gains his end without wandering or distraction.

17. The man who is so anxious about a posthumous fame, does not consider, that every one of those, who are to preserve his

† He seems to allude to the divine honours so frequently paid to their emperors, as well as to the caprice of the multitude. See EPICURET. c. 23. If you would be a philosopher, prepare yourself to be ridiculed, &c.

memory, will themselves in a few years be no more; and in like manner their successors, till after passing through a series of his admirers, they and his very memory will be extinct [and lost in oblivion.]

But suppose these repositories of your fame, and your fame itself, were to be immortal; what is that to a philosopher? I do not mean if you were dead, but supposing you were still alive; unless in a prudential view, and by way of accommodation\* to the prejudices of the vulgar.

In short, you give up the privilege and dignity of your nature, by being solicitous about the good opinion of other people.

18. Whatever is really good and beautiful is such from itself, and terminates in itself, and owes no part of its excellence to the

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\* By *οικονομικα* in this place, the Stoics meant, “That however rigid they were in theory, in common life (with regard to riches and honours for instance) they might act with some little latitude, in compliance with vulgar prejudices. Our English word “*management*” is sometimes so used. See Dr. Chapman’s answer to Tyn-dale, (printed at Cambridge) p. 71.

applause

applause of the world; being neither better nor worse on that account. And this is applicable to those things which in a popular sense are called beautiful, as all material objects and works of art. Much less do those things which are intrinsically beautiful want any foreign addition, such as justice, truth, benevolence, and modesty. What virtue of this kind is more amiable for being applauded, or less so for being censured? Is an emerald less beautiful in itself for being praised? The same may be said of gold, of ivory, of purple; and in short, of the flowers and shrubs, and of all the other productions of nature or of art.

19. If our souls exist after death, how can the heavens contain such a number as have had existence from all eternity?\* A similar question may be asked in relation to our bodies; how can the earth contain the infinite number, which have been buried in it, from so immense a space of duration?

\* This may appear a childish question, but a philosopher may be puzzled to answer it.

But



But as in the latter case, those bodies which have remained some time in the earth, are changed and dissolved and make room for other bodies; so our souls, when conveyed into the regions of the air, after some time undergo a change; and are either dispersed, or re-kindled\* and reformed into the seminal spirit or soul of the universe, whence they were originally derived; and thus make room for others to succeed them. This, I trust, is a sufficient answer, upon a supposition that our souls survive our bodies. But we should likewise consider not only the multitude of human bodies thus buried in the earth, but those also of other animals daily eaten by us, or devoured by wild beasts. For what a number is thus consumed, and as it were buried in our stomachs; yet there is sufficient room for them, as they are converted into blood or changed† into fire or

\* He alludes to their opinion of the soul being a fiery spirit.

GATAKER.

† There is great confusion and obscurity in the stoical doctrine relative to the soul, as there must be in all our disquisitions on this abstracted subject.

air,



air, those elements of which they were at first composed.

In all our researches into the true nature of any object, its matter, and its form or efficient cause, is the first consideration.\*

20. Do not suffer yourself to be hurried away by the impetuosity of your passions; but in all your pursuits have a regard to justice, and in all your speculations let truth be your aim.

21. Whatever is agreeable and consonant to thy system, O Universe!† is so to me. Nothing is either premature or too late, in my apprehension of things, which is seasonable to nature, and conducive to the good of the whole. I esteem every thing as advantageous to me which the seasons of nature produce. Every thing is from her, subsists by her power, and returns into her

\* Our author often repeats this distinction, though the utility of it is not very obvious at this time.

† Here is a beautiful apostrophe to the "Universe" and to "Nature"—"O lovely Universe! O Nature!" which Lord Shaftsbury copies; but it appears rather harsh in our language.

again.—

again.—“O city beloved of Cecrops!” says the poet, speaking of Athens. And why may not we say, O thou favourite city of Jupiter! when we speak of the universe.

22. “If you would live a life of ease and tranquillity,” says Democritus, “do not engage in too many affairs.” Would it not have been better to have said, “Engage only in *necessary* affairs, and such as reason requires of a man born for society, and transact those as reason prescribes.” For this will not only procure to us that tranquillity which is the result of a right conduct, but that also which proceeds from engaging in but a *few* affairs. For if we should subtract all that is unnecessary from what we usually say or do, how much embarrassment should we avoid, and how peacefully and undisturbed would our lives pass away!

In every transaction, therefore, we should ask ourselves this question, “Is what I am about absolutely necessary?” Neither is it sufficient to avoid all unnecessary *actions*; but all superfluous *thoughts* should be checked, that no superfluous actions may succeed.

23. Examine

23. Examine yourself, how far your life corresponds with that of a really good man; of one who acquiesces in the lot assigned him by fate, and is completely happy in the just sentiments and benevolence of his own mind.

24. Have you attended to these precepts? Give me leave to add the following.

Do not perplex yourself with things foreign to your purpose, but *simplify*† your own conduct. Has any one been guilty of an offence? it is his own affair, let him answer for it. Has any good fortune fallen to your share? it was allotted you from the beginning, in the general plan established by fate. Upon the whole, life is short; make the best of the present opportunity with prudence and justice; and even in your amusements, be upon your guard, and act with vigilance and sobriety.\*

† Απλωσον Σεαυτον, an excellent precept, as the Bishop of Worcester observes. Dial. Moral.

\* Νῆφε ἀνσιμανυ. Be vigilant without anxiety.

25. The

25. This world is either the effect of design, or it is a confused fortuitous mass; yet it is a beautiful system. Can you discern a symmetry and order in your own person, and yet believe, that the universe is a mere chaos, where every thing is thus harmonized and conducive to the good of the whole?

26. In our intercourse with the world, what a variety of disgusting characters do we meet with! malicious, debauched, obstinate, and brutish! some mere domestick animals, stupid or childish, others deceitful, parasites, mercenary or tyrannical.†

If he be a stranger in the world who knows not what is in the world, he is no less so who is ignorant of what is usually going on in the world.

He is a deserter, who deserts his station in life, and the duties which he owes to so-

† It is not easy to discover the connection between these two paragraphs, which M. Casaubon has joined together, and Gataker separated; though the former is a mere vocabulary of hard names without application, to which Casaubon says, *Quid tum?*

ciety. He is blind, the eyes of whose understanding are shut against the truth. He is a beggar, who is dependant on other people, and has not in himself every thing really necessary to his happiness. He is a mere excrescence of the world, and separates himself from the general system of nature, who complains of the common accidents of life. For the same universal nature or First Cause which produced him, produced also the event which he complains of. In short, he is a kind of voluntary exile from the community, who sets up a separate interest from the society of rational beings.

27. I see one man, a philosopher, without a coat, another without ‡ books, nay another half naked. “I have not bread to eat,” says one, “yet I will remain firm to

‡ The Emperor’s example filled the whole country with pretenders to philosophy; yet the good man judged candidly of them. Some of them had not money to buy books, like Clearthes, who wrote his master’s precepts upon oyster-shells and blade-bones (which richer folks had picked). “The works of nature are my books, (said one of them) which I can peruse whenever I please,” &c.

the



the dictates of reason." "I do not get a livelihood by my lectures on philosophy," says another, "yet I persist in my profession.\*

Let *me* then persevere in the noble art in which I have been instructed, acquiesce in it, and be happy. And let me spend the remainder of my life as one who has committed, with entire resignation, the whole management of his affairs to the will of the Gods; nor let me be either a tyrant or a slave to any man living.

28. That the world was always the same, let us consider, for instance, the times of the Emperor Vespasian. You will find that men went on precisely as they do now; they married, and educated their children; they were sick, they died; they made war, and they made feasts; they engaged in com-

\* This was the refined doctrine of Epictetus "If you would make any progress in philosophy, forbear such reasonings as these, 'If I neglect my affairs, I shall not have bread to eat;' for it is better to die with hunger, than to live in affluence, the sport of passions and inquietude;" &c.

merce ;



merce; they practised agriculture; they were as much addicted to flattery; obstinate and arrogant; they were equally suspicious and given to plotting; some weary of life and wishing for death; some *spending* their money in licentious amours; others *heaping* it up; one aiming at the consulship, and another at the imperial power.

Now that whole generation has long since been extinct.

Let us proceed then to the reign of Trajan. Here you will find men going on in the same course, and again vanish from the land of the living. In like manner contemplate the character of other times and other nations; and observe their intense application to their various projects; and immediately dropping off, and reduced to their constituent elements. But more particularly, recollect those whom you yourself have known, harrassing themselves with frivolous pursuits, neglecting the cultivation and improvement of their own minds; to which they ought to have incessantly applied, and to have been contented.

You

You ought to remember, likewise, that your own application to every object should be proportioned to its worth and importance. Thus, by not dwelling too long on trifling matters, you will avoid that disgust which is usually the effect of a contrary proceeding.

29. Those words which were formerly in general use are now, we find, become obsolete and need explanation. Such is the fate of those great names, so much celebrated amongst our ancestors, Camillus, Cæso, Volscus, Leonatus. Scipio and Cato will soon share the same destiny. Then Augustus, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius. For all things are hastening to an end, and will soon be thought fabulous, and entirely buried in oblivion.

I speak thus of those who were the wonder of their age, and shone with astonishing lustre. For as to the common herd of mankind, they die, are forgotten, and heard of no more. But, in truth, what is this “immortal fame” at best? mere vanity and an empty sound.

K

What

What is there then on which we may reasonably employ our diligence? why, this one thing alone: That our thoughts and intentions be just; our actions directed to the publick good; our words always guided by truth; and in short, that our whole disposition be such as to acquiesce in whatever happens, as what is necessary, as what is usual, and as flowing from such a fountain, the original of all things.

In short, resign yourself without reluctance to the will of fate, suffer that to dispose of the affairs of this world as it pleases. Nothing here is of long duration. The memorable actions which are performed, and those that record them, are but of a day.

30. Accustom yourself to reflect, that all things subsist by change; and that nature delights in nothing more than to renew the face of the world by such transmutations. The things which now exist are, as it were, the seeds and prolifick causes of future existences. (I will not suppose you so ignorant, as to imagine there are no seeds but those which are sown in the womb of the earth.)

30. You

31. You are just going out of the world, and have not yet learned a true simplicity of conduct, nor to live undisturbed by passions or desires; nor are you yet convinced that you are not obnoxious to any injuries from without; you have not yet learned universal benevolence, nor that true wisdom consists in acting on all occasions with justice and integrity.

32. To judge of the characters, even of the most prudent, observe their ruling propensities, what are their pursuits and their aversions.

Nothing really injurious to you, however, can depend on the conduct or the will of another, nor on any alteration or malady incident to your frail body; where then are you exposed to injury? Why in that part of you which forms your *opinion* of things. Do not *imagine* yourself injured, and all is well. Let your body,\* which is so inti-

\* Seneca, in his elegant treatise, "That a wise man is not affected by injuries," speaks of a drubbing, or of having an eye beat out, as trifles. Nay, the insult of being

mately connected with your mind, be scarified, burned, or in a state of putrefaction; yet that part of you, which is to judge of these things, may be calm and undisturbed; being convinced that nothing can be either good or evil! which may equally befall a good or a wicked man.† For that which may be the lot of one that lives *conformably* to nature, and one that lives *contrary* to nature, must be in itself necessarily *indifferent*.

33. You should always remember, that the world or universe is one animated system, including one material substance and one spirit, and that all things have a reference to this one spirit, which pervades and actuates the whole.

placed at the bottom of the table of a great man, or even sent into the servants' hall, is beneath the care of their imaginary "*wise man*."

§ Quod contemptissimo cuique ac turpissimo contingere potest bonum non est, &c.      SEN. Epist. 87.

"That which is frequently the lot of the vilest of mankind cannot be really good." He instances in riches and personal accomplishments; a handsome leg, good teeth, good health, &c.

You



You should reflect also, that all nature acts with an united force, and all things concur reciprocally in producing all things; and lastly, what connection and dependence subsists between them. As to your own being, "It is a living soul, that bears about with it a lifeless carcase," as Epictetus expresses it.

34. In things that are in a continual state of fluctuation, there can be nothing considerably either good or evil.

35. Time is a kind of rapid stream or winter's torrent, formed of things coming into existence; each of which no sooner appears than it is swept away, and succeeded by another, which again gives place to the former, perhaps under a different appearance.

All the events of life are as customary and as well known as a rose in the spring, or as fruit in the autumn; such as, sickness, death, calumnies, plots, and all those things which occasion grief or joy to foolish people.

36. Things usually succeed each other in a regular series. They do not go on, however, as so many units, individually and in-



dependently of each other, but with a connection conformable to reason; harmoniously blended, and displaying not a mere meagre succession, but a wonderful and well-compacted arrangement.

37. Remember the doctrine of Heraclitus, "That the earth, by a kind of dissolution, becomes water, water evaporates into air, and air into fire, and the reverse.

Remember also the proverbial allusion to "the man that forgot whither he was going;"\* and that people are continually deviating from that reason which governs the universe, and with which they are daily conversant; and think those things strange which occur every day; and that we ought not to act and speak like people in a dream (as we seem to do), nor like children, merely because we have been taught thus by tradition from our parents.

38. If any God should inform you that you were infallibly to die, either to-morrow or the following day at farthest; you would

\* Some tale unknown.

not be very solicitous, nor deem it any great favour, unless you were the most abject wretch breathing, to have a reprieve till the third day, instead of having your death take place to-morrow. For how inconsiderable is the difference!

In like manner, you ought not to esteem it a matter of any great importance, whether your life be prolonged to the most distant period, or be terminated to-morrow.

39. Consider how many physicians have died, after having with contracted eye-brows\* and great solemnity pronounced the death of so many patients:—how many astrologers, who thought it a great matter to foretell the fate of others:—how many philosophers, after all their disputes about death and immortality:—how many heroes, renowned for slaughter:—how many tyrants, after exercising their power of life and death with the most ferocious insolence, as if they themselves were immortal! Nay, how many

\* "Τὰς ὀφρῦς συσπασάμεναι, literally "contracting their eye-brows," &c.

cities (if I may be allowed the expression) are *dead* and *buried* in their own ruins! Helice,\* Pompeii, and Herculaneum,† and others without number.

Recollect also how many amongst your own acquaintance, whom, after attending the funerals of their friends, you have seen carried to their graves; and this within a short space of time.

On the whole, then, a wise man will consider all human affairs as of a day's continuance, contemptible, and of little importance. Man himself is to-day in embryo, to-morrow a mummy‡ or a handful of ashes.

Let us then employ properly this moment of time allotted us by fate, and leave the world contentedly; like a ripe olive dropping from its stalk, speaking well of the soil that produced it, and of the tree that bore it.

\* In Greece; destroyed by an inundation.

† In Italy; by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, as every one knows.

‡ Ταρι, ☉, alluding to their different funeral rites.

40. A wise man should stand as firm as the promontory, against which the waves are continually dashing, yet it remains unmoved, and resists and composes the rage of the ocean that swells around it.

“Unhappy as I am,” cries one, “to be exposed to such an accident.” By no means; you should rather say, “How happy am I, who, in spite of such an accident, remain unconcerned, neither dejected by the present, nor apprehensive of the future.” Every one is liable to such accidents, but every one could not bear such an accident without repining or complaint; why then should the former be reckoned a misfortune any more than the latter a felicity? On the whole, can you call that a misfortune to a man, which is not inimical to the nature of man? And do you think that can be so which does not thwart the intention of nature? But you are not now to learn what is the intention of nature. Does the misfortune which you complain of prevent you from being just, generous, temperate, prudent, and circumspect, exempt from error, modest

modest or free, or from possessing any of those good qualities, which perfect human nature?

As often therefore as any thing befalls you, which may occasion you any concern or sorrow, recollect this maxim, “ That what has happened is no misfortune, but the opportunity of bearing it with fortitude is a real felicity.

41. Though a vulgar and rather trite, it may be a useful speculation, and contribute to fortify us against the fear of death, to reflect on those who have enjoyed a very long life, and quitted it with reluctance. What advantage had they more than those who died at a more early age? Cecilius, Fabius, Julianus, Lepidus, and many other long-lived worthies.

They that attended the funerals of so many friends, are themselves carried to their tombs.\* On the whole; the differ-

\* These reflections are frequently repeated, with little variety of expression ; which probably proceeded from the constant embarrassment in which the Emperor was involved, and which afforded him little leisure to revise his works.

ence between a very long and a very short life is very inconsiderable; especially, if you consider through what toils and troubles, in what company, and in what a frail vessel, we are to pass through this world.

Do not therefore consider this life as an object of any moment. Look back on the immense gulph of time already past; and forwards, to that infinite duration yet to come, and you will find how trifling the difference is between a life of three days and of three ages (like that of Nestor).

42. Always go the shortest way to the end proposed. Now the most compendious road to our chief end is that prescribed by nature. In all your words and actions therefore pursue the plain direct path, and that will secure you from the trouble and the necessity of using stratagems, temporizing, craft, and dissimulation.

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK,



# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK V.

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§. 1. **W**HEN you are drowsy in a morning, and find a reluctance to getting out of your bed, make this reflection with yourself, “I must rise to discharge the duties incumbent on me as a man.”

“And shall I do with reluctance what I was born to do, and what I came into the world to do?” What! was I formed for no other purpose than to lie sunk in down, and indulge myself in a warm bed? —“But a warm bed is comfortable and pleasant,” you will say.—Were you born then only to please yourself; and not for action, and the exertion of your faculties?

Do not you see the very shrubs, the sparrows, the ants, the spiders, and the bees, all busied, and in their several stations co-operating to adorn the system of the universe?

And

And do you alone refuse to discharge the duties of man, instead of performing with alacrity the part allotted you by nature?

“But some rest and relaxation,” you will urge, “is necessary.”—Very true; yet nature has prescribed bounds to this indulgence, as she also has to our eating and drinking. But you exceed the bounds of *moderation*, and what is sufficient, in *this* instance. Though I must confess, where business is concerned, you [consult your ease, and] keep within *moderate* limits. But you certainly do not really love yourself; if you did, you would comply with and improve your moral nature to the utmost, and conform to the dictates of your reason.

In other arts, those who love their profession spend their whole time and strength in cultivating it; unmindful even of their food, their bathing, and every other refreshment.†

† Plutarch says of Nicias the painter, that he was so intent on the exercise of his art, as frequently to ask his servants whether he had bathed or dined. But instances of this kind, both ancient and modern, are innumerable; some, perhaps, affected.

Do

Do you then give less attention to your personal improvement than a sculptor or an actor does to his art; a miser to his money; or a vain man to his popularity? Now, when these men are intent on the respective objects of their pursuit, they will postpone their very food and their sleep (as I observed) for the accomplishment of them. And are the duties which you owe to society of less importance, or less worthy of your utmost efforts and assiduity to discharge them?

2. How easy is it, with a proper resolution, to reject and banish from your mind every turbulent and improper imagination; and to become instantly calm, and in a state of the most profound tranquility?''\*

3. Know your own consequence; and be not ashamed to say or do any thing which you think agreeable to nature and reason; and be not deterred from acting properly, on every occasion, by the censure or remarks of other people. But whatever

\* See this enforced, b. viii. §. 47.

appears

appears to you fit and honourable to be said or done, do not demean yourself by shrinking from the performance. For these critics have their own peculiar way of thinking, and their selfish views, to which you ought not to pay the least regard; but pursue the direct path pointed out to you by your own nature, and the common good: for they both lead the same way, and will generally coincide.

For my own part, I will proceed, in every instance, conformably to nature, till my frail body sinks down to rest: and when I thus expire, I will return my breath to that air, from whence I daily draw it in; and my body to that earth, which has supplied my parents with their animal substance, and my nurse with her milk, and me, for so many years, with my daily food; and still supports me, though I trample upon it, and in so many ways irreverently treat it.

4. You have no great pretensions to wit, or sprightliness of genius:—I grant it. But there are many other good qualities, in which you cannot say that nature has not  
been

been sufficiently liberal to you. Exhibit these, which are entirely in your own power : be sincere, be serious ; patient of hardships ; moderate in your love of pleasure : be contented with your condition ; have but few wants ; behave with mildness and with freedom, without levity or trifling, and with a proper sense of your own dignity.

Are not you sensible, then, how many respectable talents you might display, for which you cannot plead any natural inaptitude or incapacity ? and yet you choose to continue at a very low degree of improvement. What ! does any unavoidable defect of genius oblige you to murmur, to behave meanly, to flatter ? Is it necessary that you should be always either finding fault with your person, or, on the contrary, pampering and adorning it ? or, in short, that you should be perpetually wavering in your mind, and shifting from one folly to another ? No ; the Gods are witnesses to the contrary. —But, after all, if you were conscious that you are slow of apprehension, and of an untractable disposition, this should neither

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have



have made you too anxious and uneasy on that account, nor have suffered you too indolently to acquiesce in this intellectual imbecility.

5. Some people, when they have done you a favour, are too forward in reminding you of it, even before company. There are others, of somewhat more delicacy in that respect; but who have the favour they have done you always uppermost in their thoughts, and consider you as their debtor. A third sort bestow their favours, without claiming the least merit to themselves on that account, or hardly knowing what they have done: like a fruitful vine, which, having produced its rich clusters, seems only to have done its duty, and expects no acknowledgement. The same is applicable to the horse that has finished his course, to the hound that has ended his chace, and to the bee that has produced its honey.

Let the man, then, who has done a beneficent action, not look for applause; but repeat it the first opportunity; as the vine again yields its fruit at the proper season.

We



We ought therefore to imitate those worthies, who bestow their benefactions unobserved, and almost unconscious to themselves of their good deeds.

“ Well; but a man ought to understand the nature of his own actions; and, as he is born for society, he ought to be sensible that he acts conformably to the laws of society; and, indeed, to have it known that he does so.”

What you alledge is very true. Yet, if you interpret what I have said in your own sense, you will be one of that sort of benefactors whom I first mentioned; for they also are misled by the same plausible kind of false reasoning. But, if you would act according to the *spirit* of what I have said, you need not fear that you will omit on that account any act of generosity which you owe to society.

6. It was the usual form of supplication, among the Athenians, “ O! Jupiter, send us, we beseech thee, send us rain upon *all* the land, whether tillage or pasture, of the Athenians in general.” We ought to pray

in this simple and public-spirited manner, or not to pray at all.\*

7. As a physician§ *prescribes* to different patients different methods of cure, according to their different complaints: riding on horseback to one; cold-bathing to another; walking to a third.† Thus, by the universal Nature or Providence it is *ordained*,—that one man should be afflicted with some chronic disease; another with the loss of a limb;‡ or of a favourite child, or the like.

For, as in the former case, the word *prescribe* means something ordered conducive to the health of the patient; so, in the latter, it signifies something ordained, consonant to the sound and regular constitution of things established by fate.

\* From the whole structure of the sentence, this appears to me to be the meaning.

§ Some commentators think, that M. Aurelius here also alludes to remedies suggested by *Æsculapius* in *dreams*.—The difference is not considerable.

† The original says, “walking bare-footed.”

‡ Which was partly the case with *Epietetus*.

And

And thus those accidents which befall us may be said to be as much adapted or fitted to our situation in the world, as such a block of marble or stone is said by an architect to be fitted to the place allotted it in a wall or pyramid, or any other structure.

For, indeed, the whole universe is one harmonious system: and as, from the various material bodies united into one, this world is framed; so, from the concurrence of the various second causes, is formed that supreme, universal cause,\* which we call Fate.

The most ignorant vulgar understand this way of speaking, when they say, “Such a thing was a man’s *destiny*.”—It was so; but then it was thus ordained and allotted him by a providential relation to his good, and to that of the whole.

Let us therefore submit to our lot, as we do to the prescriptions of a good physician. For many of their medicines are nauseous

\* Nihil aliud est Fatum, quàm series implexa causarum,  
SEN. de Benefic. b. 4.

and unpleasant ; yet we *swallow* them,† in hopes of recovering our health. Whatever then contributes to the perfection and completion of the common system of nature, ought to be as much regarded as your own health.

Rest satisfied then with whatever befalls you (though it may be something distressful) ; as it certainly tends to the welfare of the universe, and is agreeable to the will and pleasure of Jupiter himself ; who, you may be assured, would not have permitted it, if it had not contributed to the good of the whole.

For neither does any inferior nature usually admit of any thing, which is not correspondent with the little contracted system over which it presides.

You ought, therefore, for two reasons, to acquiesce in every event which befalls you : first, because it was appointed ; and, as it were, interwoven with your particular destiny by the most ancient and venerable

† They go merrily down,

COLLIER.

of all causes ; and, in the second place, because it is connected with the prosperity, the perfection, and, in some sense, with the very subsistence of the universal œconomy :\* For as, in any connected system, by the amputation of any part you mutilate the whole ; the same effect must ensue, if you destroy the coherence and connexion between the several causes which form and constitute the universe. This you are guilty of, as much as is in your power, by your murmuring and reluctance under the common events of life.

8. Be not disgusted, nor discouraged, nor fret, if you do not always succeed in acting conformably to your good principles. But, though repulsed, renew the charge, and

\* We must always keep in mind the doctrine of the Stoics,—“ That every single event, and even the follies and vices of men, made a necessary part of the universal plan ; as Providence produced good from ill, and made every thing tend to the perfection of the whole.” No speculation of this kind, however, could diminish our abhorrence of vice, so destructive to individuals, and to society.—Lord Bolingbroke dressed up Pope’s System from this warehouse.

perform

perform with complacency all the duties of humanity ; and do not return with reluctance to your philosophy, like a boy to school. But as those who labour under any disorder in their eyes apply with alacrity to any medicine† which promises them relief ; so should you submit to, and cheerfully acquiesce in the precepts of right reason.

Remember, however, that philosophy exacts nothing of you but what nature requires ; though you yourself are always inclined to thwart and act contrary to nature. But which of these is most friendly to our real interests ? Does not pleasure itself often impose upon us, under the very pretence of being agreeable to nature ?

But consider with yourself, whether any thing can be more delightful than magnanimity, freedom of soul, simplicity, candour, and sanctity of manners.

Indeed, what can be more friendly to our interest than the cardinal virtue of pru-

† The white of an egg applied with a sponge is here mentioned as an eye-salve ; which the Scotch translator calls a *common* medicine for weak eyes.

Qu.  
dence ?



dence ? which, by furnishing us with knowledge, founded on just principles, secures us from error,§ and renders the course of our lives prosperous, and free from disappointment.

9. All things here are so mysterious, and involved in such obscurity, that not a few philosophers,† and those of no common sagacity, have thought them absolutely inexplicable.—Nay, even the Stoics have been of opinion, that they cannot, without difficulty, be comprehended. And, indeed, the kind of assent which we give is liable to error, and, of course, must be unsteady. For where is the man that will pronounce himself infallible ; and who has never found it necessary to alter his opinion ?

If we turn our thoughts to those objects which mortals are so fond of, how transitory

§ The Stoics flattered themselves with arriving at this degree of perfection ; though M. Aurelius is more modest than his brethren.—See the next Section.

† Pyrrho, and all those of the new academy : neither indeed does the stoical Emperor differ much from them in what follows.

and

and how contemptible must those things be, which fall to the lot of the most worthless wretches!—to pimps, prostitutes, and highwaymen!

If, after this, you consider the characters and conduct of the generality of those with whom you must converse, you will find it difficult to bear with the most agreeable; not to mention, that few of us can bear to reflect even on our own conduct.

In short, amidst this darkness and degeneracy in which we are involved, this rapid flux of time, and revolution of the world and its affairs, I see but few things worth our serious regard or attention. On the contrary, we should console ourselves with the prospect of our speedy dissolution, yet wait with complacency till it arrives;\* and, in the mean time, rest satisfied with these two reflections: First, that nothing can happen to us, that is not the necessary consequence of the established system of the universe; and, in the next place, that it

\* See the Preface.

is in our own power not to do any thing displeasing to that deity or good genius within us. For this no one can compel† us to do.

10. You should frequently ask yourself this question,—“In what state of moral improvement is my soul, that sovereign part of me, which presides over all my faculties? Is my mind furnished as that of a philosopher ought to be; or is it degraded to the level of a child, an effeminate youth, or a silly girl; or, what is yet worse, to that of a *tyrant*,‡ a brute, or a savage beast?

11. Of what real value those things are, which the generality of mankind esteem

† M. Aurelius (with most of the Stoics) supposes the will of man to be free; though not very consistently, perhaps, with their doctrine of fate. The mind, indeed, is properly incapable of being *forced*. But our actions *may be* over-ruled, almost irresistibly, by that series of events which they suppose, or by the solicitation of the appetites, &c. See Dr. CHAPMAN, as above, p. 59.

‡ One would imagine that his son Commodus could never have seen these Moral Reflections.

*good,*

*good*, you may learn from hence; that if any one should hear those things which are intrinsically *good*, such as prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude, mentioned on the stage, he would not bear to have any reflection made on them, which did not entirely coincide with his own ideas of *goodness*. But as for those things, which are esteemed as good only in the opinion of the vulgar, he would hear very patiently, and without the least offence, the ridicule of the comic poet, and think his wit very properly applied. And, indeed, this distinction is very well understood by the vulgar themselves: otherwise, they would not be offended, and reject with indignation, such a liberty in the former case; and, in the latter, be well pleased with the wit and raillery of the poet on riches, and those things which only administer to luxury and the pomp of life, and the invidious display of our good fortune.

Stand forth, therefore, and ask yourself seriously, whether those things can have any intrinsic goodness or value in them, which  
are

are so proper a mark for satire; and the ridicule of which is always received with applause?§

12. My whole being consists of an active principle, and a material substance; that is, of a soul and body: neither of which can be annihilated, or reduced to *nothing*, as they were not produced from nothing.\* Every part of me, therefore, will again take its place, after a certain change, as some part of the universe; and that again will be transferred to another part of the system: and thus in an infinite succession.

From the like change, I myself came into existence, and my parents before me; and so on backwards to all eternity. For thus, I think, we may speak; though the world

§ The indelicate *wit* of the Comic Poet, to which the Emperor alludes, is not worth translating: it is like that of the *Cynic*, who (as Laertius says) spit in a gentleman's face, because his house was so elegantly fitted up, that he could find no other place so fit for his purpose.

\* Many of the Philosophers denied the possibility of creation: "Ex nihilô nihil fit" was their axiom.

be



be really limited to certain fixed periods and stated revolutions.†

13. Reason is a faculty which is sufficient for its own purposes.\* Its operations originate from itself, and proceed *directly* to the end proposed; whence those actions, which are directed by this faculty of reason, are called right actions, as expressive of that *rectitude* and simplicity with which they are performed.

14. None of those things can be said to belong to a man, which do not belong to him as such. External advantages, for instance, are not necessarily required by man: nor does human nature promise them; they not being any ways perfective of our nature. They can never, therefore, be the chief end of man, or complete his happiness.

† These periodical renovations of the world by conflagrations were believed by Heraclitus, and other Philosophers, beside the Stoics.

\* See Mrs. Carter's Discourses of Epictetus, b. i. c. 1. The original adds, "The art of Logic," of which the Stoics were ridiculously fond.

Besides,



Besides, if they belonged to man as such, it would not be our duty to despise them ; and even, on some occasions, absolutely to reject them. Neither would it be so laudable an act for a man to be contented without them ; nor would he be reckoned a *good* man, who abstained from them, when he had them at his command, if they were really and intrinsically good. But now, the greater self-denial a man shews in the enjoyment of these things, and the greater patience under the loss of them, so much a better and greater man he is esteemed.

15. Such as are the objects on which your thoughts are most frequently employed, such will be the state of your mind. For the soul takes a tincture from the usual current of its ideas. Take care, therefore, that it be constantly impressed with such reflections as these. For instance, “ That in whatever *place* we live, it is in our power to live a good life. But we may happen to live in a court ; therefore we may live a good life even in a court.”

Again ;

Again; “For whatever purpose any thing was produced, to that it naturally tends, and is carried to the pursuit of it: but to whatever any thing naturally tends, that must be the chief end for which it was made. Now, whatever is the chief end of any being, that must constitute its chief interest and its happiness. The chief happiness, therefore, of a rational creature, must be placed in society: for, that we were made for society, has already been shewn.”\*

But is it not evident, that things of inferior worth in the scale of being were made for the more excellent; and those again for their mutual benefit? Now animated beings certainly excel the inanimate; and, of animated creatures, those that are endued with reason are most excellent.

16. It is madness in any one to expect impossibilities. Now it is impossible† for

\* B. ii. §. 1.

† That is, “*morally* impossible,” according to their present ideas of things; and under the tyranny of vicious habits.

bad men to act otherwise than as such: why then should we expect it?

17. Nothing ever befalls any one, but what it is in his power to bear. The same misfortunes happen to others, who, either through ignorance and insensibility, or from an ostentatious magnanimity, have stood firm, and apparently free from grief or perturbation.

Now, is it not shameful that ignorance or vanity should display more fortitude than all our prudence and philosophy?

18. Things themselves cannot in any wise touch the soul, or penetrate to its recesses; nor effect any change, or excite any emotion there; she herself does this: and whatever *judgment* or opinion she forms on the occurrences of life, such she really makes them.

19. We are to consider the connexion, by which we are united to the rest of mankind, in a different light, when we are bound to do them good, and when we are to bear with their infirmities. In the former case, it is the most intimate that can be: in the latter, if people endeavour to disturb or in-

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interrupt

interrupt us in the discharge of the duties of life, they then come under the notion of those *indifferent things*, which have really no more relation to us than the sun, the wind, or a wild beast. These things may hinder me in the *execution* of my purpose; but I have still the *reserve* of a *good intention*,\* which nothing can prevent, and of a mind well disposed, which can convert this very disappointment to its advantage; and what seemed to interrupt its progress towards perfection really promotes it.

20. Of all things that are in the universe, direct your adoration to the most excellent: and this is that Being, who directs and governs all the rest.

In like manner, pay the greatest reverence to that which in yourself is most excellent; which is that faculty the most nearly allied to the Deity. For it is this which employs all your other faculties, and regulates the conduct of your life.

\* See B. iv. §. 1. and the Note.

21. That which no ways injures the community, cannot injure any individual.† Under any appearance then of injury to yourself, apply this rule; “If the community is not the worse for it, neither am I.”

But suppose the community to have been really injured, it is not your business to be angry; but, if you can, to shew how it might have been prevented.

22. Frequently reflect with what celerity the scenes of life are shifted and disappear. Things glide on continually, like a rapid stream; the energies of nature are producing perpetual changes; the causes themselves are subject to infinite variations; and nothing is in a fixed and permanent state.

Consider also that immense gulph of the past and present time, in which all things are swallowed up and disappear. What folly is it then for any man to be either elated or dejected, or to make himself

† He either goes upon the principles, that

“Self-love and social are the same;”

or, if he alludes to the system of the universe, (as he is supposed to do) the *whole* certainly includes every *part*.

M 2

miserable,



miserable, on account of things that can trouble him but for so short a term of duration !§

Remember what a mere atom you are, compared to the universe ; and what a moment of time is allotted you, in respect to eternity ; and how insignificant you are in the system of fate !

23. Does any one treat me injuriously ? Let him look to it ! Such is his peculiar disposition, and he acts accordingly. For my part, I shall endeavour to be such as the nature of things requires me to be ; and act suitably to my own nature and present situation.

§ St. Chrysostom compares a man of this character to one that should value himself on the length of his shadow. “ In the morning (says he) the man would fancy himself as tall as a cypress, and strut about in every publick place : but at noon, when he saw his shadow fall about his heels, he would be ashamed to be seen, and seclude himself from society ; till, on the approach of evening, he would resume his consequence, in proportion to the dimensions of his shadow : but the shades of night would soon extinguish his glory,” &c. Orat. 67. from GATAK.

24. Let



24. Let not that sovereign and ruling part of your soul, your reason, be any ways affected either by the painful or pleasurable sensations of your carnal part; but confine herself to her own department, and not mix with the crowd of passions and affections, which ought also to be kept within their proper bounds. But if at any time those impressions should extend themselves to the mind, by a sympathy which is the result of its union with the body, it is then in vain to resist our natural *feelings*.\* Yet the ruling part of us should not be suffered to form any opinion of them, as either really good or evil, they being neither.

25. We should converse with, and imitate the life of the Gods.† This *he* will do,

\* It is pleasant enough to hear these Philosophers disputing against nature, who continually flies in their face. “Omnes enim motus qui non voluptate nostrâ fiunt invicti sunt: *sensum hominis nulla exiit virtus.*”

SEN. de Irâ, b. ii.

“No virtue can divest us of the feelings of human nature.”

† To this degree of perfection the Stoics thought their imaginary wise man might arrive; though they generally

who shews a disposition always contented, and acquiescing in the dispensations of Providence ; and who acts conformably to that good genius, which Jupiter has appointed as his deputy, a particle of his own essence, to preside over and regulate the conduct of every man. This is, in short, the mind, or rational faculty, of each individual.†

26. Would you quarrel with a man who had the misfortune to have a bad breath, or any other natural infirmity ? If his lungs or his constitution necessarily produce those effects, how can he avoid it ?

But, you will say, “ It is not a parallel case between a bad breath and an ill action. The man, in the latter case, being endued with reason, might know and avoid acting ill.”

Well, Sir, you are a happy man ; and, as *you* always act *rationally*, endeavour to

found life too short to complete their plan : like Harlequin’s horse, (if we may use so trite an allusion) which had just learned to live without meat, and died.

† See VIRG. Georg. b. iv. l. 220.—HOR. Divinæ particulam auræ.

excite

excite the same laudable disposition in your friend: Shew him his error, and admonish him; if he listens to your advice, you will cure him of his fault, and there will be no room for your anger. Do not make too serious an affair of it; nor yet encourage him in his faults by a meretricious compliance.

27. As you intend to live, if you could retire from publick life,\* it is equally in your power to live, in your present situation. But if any unavoidable impediments prevent this, it is at least in your power entirely to quit this life; yet without considering what you suffer in this world, or your departing out of it, as any real evil.†

The room smokes, and I leave it: why should you deem this a matter of any moment? In the mean time, as nothing can

\* M. Casaubon thinks M. Aurelius often wished, and was almost tempted to retire from his exalted station.— This is addressed “*To himself.*”

† Why then quit the world to get rid of what are no real evils?—See this absurdity noted above, and in the Preface.

*compel*

*compel* me to act thus, I still maintain my freedom ; and no one can prevent me from doing what I please. But nothing can *please* me, that is not consonant to the nature of a rational creature, and one born for society.

28. That great Being, who is the soul of the universe, has always a regard to society, and the good of the whole ; and has made things of an inferior kind subservient to those of a superior order. Those of the latter kind he has likewise united by mutual sympathy to each other.

You see, then, by what a regular subordination all things are distributed and arranged, according to their respective dignity and worth ; and those that are most excellent, connected by similar sentiments and reciprocal duties.

29. Recollect how you have conducted yourself towards the Gods, your parents, your brothers, your wife, your children ; how you have treated your preceptors, and all who were concerned in your education ; your friends ; your slaves and domesticks.

Whether,

Whether, to this day, you have not done or said any thing injurious to any of those I have mentioned.

Recollect also, what a variety of affairs you have been engaged in, and what fatigues you have been enabled to undergo; that the history of your life is now nearly completed; and that you have performed the part allotted you:† how many scenes of grandeur, and what are vulgarly thought glorious fights, you have beholden with indifference; and how many pleasures and pains you have despised. And finally, to how many perverse people you have behaved with condescension and indulgence.

30. Why should the ignorant and illiterate have it in their power to disturb the repose of the wise and intelligent part of mankind? But, you will say, who are these wise and intelligent people? why, those who have investigated the original and the final causes of things; who have discovered that rational Being which pervades all nature; and

† *διοίκησις*, your publick administration.

through



through all ages, at certain stated periods, renovates this world, and regulates the universe.

31. In what a short space of time will you be reduced to ashes, or to a mere skeleton; and a name only (perhaps not that) survive you! And what is a name? a mere sound, and an echo!

Indeed, all those things which are so highly valued in the world are empty, transient, and unimportant; and the contests about them like the snarling of puppy-dogs, or the quarrels of children at play; one moment laughing, the next moment crying, on the most trifling occasions.† As for fidelity, modesty, justice, and truth, they, as the Poet Hesiod foretold,

‘From this extensive globe to heav’n are flown.’

What then remains to detain you here? If the objects of sense are uncertain, and liable to continual changes; if the senses themselves are obscure, and often imposed

† These sentiments are repeated; but sometimes in more striking language.



upon by false ideas ; if the vital soul itself is no more than a mere vapour, sublimed from the blood and animal spirits ; if the applause of such insignificant mortals be vanity in the extreme ; what is it, I say, that you wait for here ?

Why, I am resolved to wait with complacency, till I am either extinguished, or translated to another state of existence ; and, till that time comes, what is required of me but to praise and worship the Gods, and to do good to men ? to *bear*† with their failings, and to *forbear* injuring them ? And, lastly, to remember, that what is without the sphere of your own person neither belongs to you, nor is in your power.

32. It is in your own power to be successful in all your undertakings, if you pursue the right course ; if you form right opinions, and act with due *deliberation*.§

† “ *Ἀνέχεσθαι καὶ Ἀπεχεσθαι.*” The summary of the stoic morality : “ To bear with the afflictions, and to abstain from the pleasures of life ;” or, as here, “ to bear with the failings of men, and to forbear from injuring them.”

§ “ *Ὀδῶ*, for *Μεθοδῶ*, from Xenophon.—M. Aurelius uses the word in this sense more than once.

These

These two privileges are common to Gods and to men, and to all rational beings: first, not to be controlled in their actions by any thing foreign or external; and, secondly, to place their happiness in right affections and virtuous actions; and to confine their desires within these limits.

33. If a misfortune is, in no respect, my fault, or the consequence of any fault of mine; nor injurious to the community; why am I uneasy; or concerned about it? and who can injure the community?†

34. Do not suffer yourself to be hurried away by any sudden impulse of fancy or compassion.\* If any one wants your assistance, indeed, give it to the best of your power, and according to the merits of the case, even though it concerns the indifferent things of life; yet you must not consider them as suffering any real misfortune, for that is a vulgar opinion. But, as the

† They consider vice, in some sense, as injuring only the vicious person.

\* The reader need not be reminded of the stoical doctrine in regard to the passions.

old

old man in the *Farce*,† when taking leave of his pupil, talked to him about his top, &c. though he knew it to be a childish amusement; so you may act with regard to the vulgar, and condescend to their weakness on those occasions.

In like manner, when you are pronouncing a panegyric in the Rostrum,§ my good man, are you not sensible what trifling this is? Very true; nevertheless people are highly delighted with these things.

Must you then be a fool, because other people are?—Let it suffice that you formerly have been so.

A man may be *happy* in any situation, if he is not wanting to his own improvement in virtue: for happiness depends entirely on virtuous affections and good actions.

† The Farce or Fable alluded to is unknown.

§ The original “*Rostra*” in the Forum, composed of the *beaks* of ships taken at Antium, as every school-boy knows.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK VI.\*

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§. 1. **T**HE material world is subject to, and readily obeys the impulse of that intelligent Being, or sovereign reason, which gives laws to the universe; who has nothing in himself unfriendly to mankind; but being essentially good in his own nature, can have neither motive nor inclination to injure any one. Nor is any one in fact injured by him; but all things are produced and regulated according to his perfect wisdom and goodness.

2. Whatever your situation may be, with regard to external accommodations, whether suffering from the extremes of cold or heat, from want of rest or the contrary, whether censured or applauded, let these

\* This seems to me one of the most correct books.

outward

outward circumstances make no difference in your moral conduct; but act as becomes you. Nay, whether you are in health, or at the point of death, (for among the duties of life, to submit decently to its termination is not the least important) it is sufficient, even at that awful moment, to manage it with propriety.\*

3. Look into and beyond the mere surface of things. Let not the true nature or intrinsic worth of any thing escape you.

Every object will very soon change its present appearance; and either evaporate into the common mass of matter, (if it be an uniform homogeneous substance) or be dissolved and dispersed into its respective elements.

4. That intelligent Being which presides over the universe, acts always with design, is conscious of his own proceedings, and knows the true nature of the materials which are the subject of his operations.

\* Τὸ παρὸν εὖ θέσθαι. “To manage well the present moment,” was a maxim of the *wise* Pittacus, and became proverbial.

5. The best method of revenge is, not to imitate the person who has done you the injury.\*

6. Let this be your only pleasure, and seek for no other amusement: to be constantly employed in the service of mankind, and to proceed from one publick-spirited, generous action to another, with a constant eye to the approbation of the Deity.

7. It is the rational or governing principle of the soul, which excites itself to action and directs its operations; and which renders itself such as it chooses to be; and makes every event of life appear such as itself would have it to be.

8. All things come to pass according to the established system of the universe. This one universal cause is simple, self-existent, and independent of every thing else, either external or internal.

\* This sentiment is derived from the Christian School, being contrary to the maxims of the earlier sages of Greece or Rome.

N

9. The



9. The world is either a confused chaos, fortuitously jumbled together, without order or connection; or it is one compact system, regularly disposed, the effect of design, and under the direction of Providence.

If the former, why should I desire to continue longer here amidst such a scene of confusion, and of things so capriciously heaped together? And what other concern have I here, but to return as soon as possible

“To the Earth from whence I sprung?”

as Homer expresses it.\* But why should I give myself any trouble about it? Since, act as I will, my dissolution is unavoidable.

But if the other part of the alternative be true, and the world be ruled by a good Providence, let me piously adore him, maintain the tranquillity of my mind, and confide in his care and protection.

10. When, from any disagreeable circumstance, you find your temper necessarily discomposed, endeavour immediately to recover yourself; and do not be put *out of*

\* Iliad, vii. 99.

*tune* (as it were) by things unavoidable. For by thus returning continually to your first principles, you will preserve that harmony of soul which is so essential to happiness.†

11. Suppose you had a mother-in-law and your own mother, at the same time, you would think it necessary to pay a decent respect to the former, but you would probably return more frequently and with more pleasure to the latter.

Now such is your situation with regard to the court and to philosophy. To the latter you must frequently have recourse, and submit to her discipline; which will make the bustle of a court more tolerable, and likewise make you more agreeable to those with whom you are there to converse.

12. It might check the appetite of a luxurious epicure, to consider the dishes which are set before him, as undisguised by cookery: That this, for instance, is the car-

† The metaphor is well supported in the original.

Μὴ ἐξίσησο τῇ πυθμῇ.

case of a fish or of a bird; this some part of a *dead pig*. Again, that this wine, which we call Falernian or by any other fine name, is only the juice squeezed from a grape; this purple robe, the wool of a sheep, tinged with the blood of a shell-fish. And that even the commerce of the sexes, so highly exalted by fancy, is a mere animal function\* of the lowest kind.

This sort of reflection penetrates beyond the surface to the very essence of things, and exhibits them in their native simplicity and in their true colours.

We ought, in like manner, to extend our remarks through life, and apply them to those things which appear the most plausible; strip them of their splendid embel-

\* The good Emperor seems here to have imitated, un-awares, the indelicacy of the Cynics; and to have carried his severity to a cynical extreme. For were we entirely to divest every object of the lustre which *fancy* throws round it, we should destroy half the happiness of life: And, as the Roman poet expresses it, may consider "a sacred grove as a heap of faggot-sticks;" and virtue itself, "as mere words and an empty name."

ishments and false colours, with which they have been adorned by eloquence, and expose their worthlessness; for a solemn appearance often conceals an impostor;\* and when you fancy yourself the most seriously engaged, you are most probably imposed upon. Consider what Crates said on the solemn look even of the philosopher Xenocrates himself.†

13. Most of those things which the vulgar are so fond of, may be referred to the most general class of inanimate nature, and such as have mere existence: first, mineral or vegetable substances, as stone, timber, vines, fig-trees, and the like. Those things which engage the attention of a somewhat higher class, have usually life to recommend them, as flocks and herds. Others, of a more cultivated taste, are more taken with

\* Δεινὸς ὁ τῷ φρονήσει παραλογιστὴς. Pomp is a *terrible* Sophister, (literally.)

† Xenocrates was so remarkable for his stern countenance and solemn air, that it became almost proverbial—“He looks as solemn as the Bust of Xenocrates.” The saying our Author alludes to is not recorded.

the rational part of the creation, and human nature; yet not in general, but as distinguished by their skill in arts, or some particular accomplishment; or, sometimes, merely as human creatures; such as the possession of a number of slaves. But he who respects rational nature, as such, and in its social capacity, will pay little attention to any thing else, but to preserve his own mind in its rational and social state, and to co-operate with that Being who presides over the universe, and to whom he himself is by nature allied.

14. Some things are rushing into existence, others hastening to dissolution; and of those which now exist, some parts are already flown off and vanished. The world is renewed by continual change and fluctuation, as time is by perpetual succession. Who then would set any great value on things thus floating down the stream, and of which we cannot for a moment secure the possession? One might as well fall in love with a sparrow, which flies by us, and is instantly gone out of sight. Such is the life  
of



of every man; a mere vapour exhaled from the blood; a momentary breath of air, drawn in by the lungs.

And as our *life* consists in thus drawing in and breathing out the air by respiration, which we incessantly perform; so *death* is no more than restoring that power of breathing which we received at our birth, to the source from whence we derived it.

15. There is no merit nor any great privilege in mere animal functions: Neither in perspiring as plants do, nor in respiring like the brute creation, nor in receiving the impression of objects by sensation, nor to be mechanically put in motion by the passions; that we *herd* together and unite in society, or that we are nourished by our food; which is an act of no more dignity than the excretion of its superfluities.

What then ought we to judge really worthy of our esteem? To be received in public with applause and acclamation? by no means. Nor yet are panegyrical orations any thing more, than a different kind of acclamations; no more to be valued than  
the



the huzzas of the multitude. If then we exclude every degree of fame and glory, what remains worth our regard? Why nothing, in my opinion, is truly so, but to act conformably to the end for which nature designed us, and to persevere in that course.

Thus it is in all other arts and occupations of men: for this is the chief aim of every artist, that his work may answer the end for which it was intended. This is the object of the gardener who plants a vine; of the horseman who breaks a colt; or the sportsman who trains a spaniel. What else is proposed in the education and discipline of youth? This then ought to be the object of your esteem. And if you can accomplish this point, you need not be solicitous about any thing more.

But, will you never cease to admire and set a value on a variety of other objects? If so, you will never enjoy your freedom, nor be sufficient to your own happiness, nor be exempted from many troublesome passions. You will necessarily be exposed to envy, jealousy, and suspicion; and endeavour

deavour to undermine those, who, you think, may get the start of you, and deprive you of what you so highly esteem.

In short, you will unavoidably be tormented by the want of those things, and be tempted even to murmur against the Gods.

On the contrary, if you pay a proper regard to your own rational nature, you will always be pleased with yourself, will act agreeably to the good of society, and consonantly to the will of the Gods; that is, you will humbly acquiesce in and be entirely pleased with their administration.

16. The elements of the material world are in continual motion, and carried about in every direction. Yet virtue is subject to none of those deviations; but is something of a more divine nature, and, in a way above our comprehension, proceeds directly to her point, and never fails of success.\*

17. How preposterous is the conduct of mankind! They refuse the just tribute of praise to their contemporaries, amongst whom they live, yet are themselves ex-

\* See the Preface.

tremely

tremely ambitious of the esteem of posterity, whom they never have seen, nor ever will see ; which is as absurd as it would be to lament that they have not been celebrated by those that lived before them.

18. Do not conclude, because *you* find a thing difficult, that therefore it is beyond the power of man to perform. But, whatever you see practicable by other men, if it be proper to be done, be assured it is in *your* power to perform.†

19. Should an antagonist in any gymnastic combat scratch our face with his nails, or dash his head in our stomachs, we should hardly shew any signs of resentment, or be offended, or suspect him of any treacherous design upon us ; we should guard

† “ Vos Stoici nimis dura præcipitis : nos homunciones sumus, omnia nobis negare non possumus.—Satis natura homini dedit roboris ; *nolle* in causâ est, *non posse* prætenditur.”  
SEN. Ep. 116.

“ You Stoics are too rigid in your precepts : we frail mortals cannot deny ourselves every gratification.—Nay, Sir, nature has given you sufficient strength ; but you pretend want of *power*, when want of *inclination* is the real cause.”  
ourselves

ourselves against him indeed, as well as we could, yet not as an enemy; we may avoid his blows with calm caution, but without jealousy or suspicion.

Thus you should act in the other transactions of life. Let us pass by without notice many of the little conflicts which we must expect to meet with in the world: we may parry them, as I observed, and manage the contest with caution, but without malignity or ill-will.

20. If any one can convince me of an error, and make it evident that I have either acted or judged wrongly on any occasion, I will gladly retract my opinion; for truth is my only object, which can never prove detrimental to any one. He alone can suffer detriment who voluntarily persists in ignorance and error.

21. I endeavour, on all occasions, to do my duty, and act as becomes me. As for other things, I give myself no concern about them; being such as are either void of life, or void of reason, or involved in error, and ignorant of the true road of life.

As

As for brute creatures, and, in general, things void of reason, you may use them freely, and with that superiority which your privilege of reason gives you over beings of an inferior order.

But men, as partaking of reason as well as you, must be treated with that regard and equality which the laws of society require.

Now, in all your transactions, remember to invoke the Gods to your assistance; nor be solicitous how long or how short a time may be allowed for these devout exercises: for a life of three hours, if it be well spent, will secure the favour of the Gods and your own felicity, (as well as three ages).

22. Alexander of Macedon and his groom, at their death, were reduced to the same level; for they were either reformed into the prolifick soul of the universe, or were dispersed amongst the elementary atoms without distinction.\*

\* Our author frequently speaks *sceptically* upon the subject of a future state, and the separate personal existence of the soul; though, in general, he seems to have believed it.

23. Consider



23. Consider what a variety of operations are going on at the same moment, both in our bodies and in our souls; and then you will cease to wonder that such an infinite number, or rather, that all things which come to pass in this one universal system which we call the world, subsist, and are upheld by one *intelligent* Being.

24. If any one should ask you civilly, how the name of Antoninus is written, you would hardly pronounce each letter as loud as you could bawl: or even suppose they spoke in a rude passionate tone, you would not think yourself at liberty to imitate them; but would rather calmly pronounce the number of letters which the name required.

In like manner, the several duties of life depend on certain numbers and measures to complete them. These you must observe and regularly perform without noise or tumult; and if others are *angry*, you must not be so too, but pursue your point by the direct road, unmoved by their unreasonable perverseness.

25. It



25. It is a species of cruelty, not to suffer men to pursue those means which they think conducive to their pleasure or advantage. This you are in some measure guilty of, when you are angry with a man for acting foolishly; for he acts thus under a notion that what he does will conduce in some sense to his interest. “But,” you will say, “it is not really so.” Do you therefore inform him better, and shew him his error, but without anger or ill humour.

26. Death puts an end to the impressions on our senses, to the impetuosity of our passions, and to the exercise of our understanding; and sets the mind free from her servile duty, which she is forced to pay to the body.

It is a shame, however, while life continues, that the soul should grow languid in her functions, while the body retains its health and vigour.

27. Beware, when you take the title of *Cæsar*, that you do not insensibly assume too much of the *Emperor* ;\* nor be infected with

\* *Ἀπο-καίσαρῶν*. Take care that you do not become  
*Cæsarized.* the

the haughty manners of some of your predecessors : for there is a possibility of such an event. Take care therefore to preserve the simplicity, the native goodness and integrity of your character. Be serious, free from ostentation, and a lover of justice ; pious, humane, affectionate to your relations, and constant in the discharge of every social duty. In short, endeavour through life to be such as philosophy would willingly make you to be. Reverence the Gods, and consult the good of mankind. Life is short ; and the chief concern of man in this world is to preserve a good conscience, and to make himself useful to mankind.

Act always as becomes a pupil of Antoninus Pius.† Imitate him in the constant tenour of his conduct, in the evenness of his temper, in the sanctity of his manners, the serenity of his countenance, his affability, his contempt of vain glory, in his steadiness and patience in investigating the truth, and his never passing over any affair till he had thoroughly examined and clearly understood

† That good Emperor who adopted our Author.

it. Remember how patiently he bore unmerited reproach without any retaliation; how careful he was not to engage precipitately in any affair, nor to listen to informers; what an accurate inspector he was into the characters and actions of men; yet by no means of a satyrical turn; neither suspicious, nor timorous; nor affecting, like the Sophists, more wisdom than he really possessed.

How little stress he laid on the pomp and splendor of life appeared in his palace, his furniture, his dress, his table, and in his attendants. He bore fatigue and confinement so well, that he frequently continued on business in the same room till late at evening without any inconvenience. §

He was constant and uniform in his attachment to his friends, and bore with complacency their freedom in opposing his opinion, and was always pleased when they proposed some better expedient than his

§ The original says, "His slender diet left no superfluities which required any *excretion* before the usual times." Temperance has not only health to recommend it, but delicacy. Hence the ancient Persians, as every one knows, thought it indecent to spit or blow the nose before company.

OWN.

own. He was religious without superstition. Imitate him then in these things; and when your last hour approaches, may it find you possessed of as good a conscience as he was.

28. Rouse from your slumbers and recollect yourself; and when you are perfectly awake, and perceive that what troubled you was only a dream,\* extend your reflections to the transactions of real life, and you will find them but little different from the visions of the night.

29. I consist of a soul and a body. To the body all things, in a moral view, are indifferent; for the body can make no distinction. And even to the soul nothing can be really good or evil but her own operations, and these are all in her own power. Yet even of these actions she is only concerned with the present; for what are past, or to come, are now indifferent to her.†

\* Probably the Emperor had had a disagreeable dream.

† Seneca endeavours to explain this paradox, by saying, "That whatever is good must be of some advantage to us; but if it is of advantage to us, it must then exist," &c.

Ep. 117.

O

30. While

30. While the hands and the feet perform their respective offices, they move naturally and with ease. Thus, while a man performs the duties peculiar to man, he acts agreeably to nature; and what is agreeable to the intentions of nature, cannot be evil.

If men were made for nothing but sensual pleasures, even highwaymen, debauchees, parricides, and tyrants, may have a full share of those gratifications, such as they are.

31. Have you not observed how mere mechanicks will comply, to a certain degree, with the impertinence of the ignorant and unskilful; yet they will strenuously defend the truth of their art against them, and will not on any consideration be prevailed on to depart from its rules?\*

Now is it not shameful that an architect or a tooth-drawer† should pay a greater

\* Lord Shaftsbury more than once uses this sensible illustration.

† M. Casaubon is much offended that M. Aurelius should rank the profession of physick amongst the mechanical arts. But the Emperor certainly means here the  
regard



regard to his profession than man to his, which is common to *him* with the Gods themselves?

32. The great continents of Asia and Europe are no more than little corners of the globe; the great ocean, comparatively, is a mere drop of water, and Mount Athos a grain of sand in respect to the universe; as the present instant of time is only a point compared to eternity. All things here are diminutive, subject to change and to decay; yet all things proceed, either directly or by consequence, from the one intelligent Cause. Even things apparently the most deleterious and offensive, the rage of wild beasts, poisons, thorns and thistles, and the like, are connected with and the necessary appendages of things more noble and more beautiful.

Do not therefore imagine that these things are exempted from the superintendence of

lowest manual operators, (the *χείρ-ἔργοι*) though even that branch of the profession has long been distinguished in this country for their speculative as well as their practical knowledge.



that good Being whom you worship, and who is the universal fountain of existence.

33. He that has viewed the present age, has seen every thing that has been or that will be to all eternity. For things always have and always will go on in the like uniform manner.

Often reflect on the mutual connection and relation which things have to each other. For all parts of the universe are in some sense linked together, and therefore conspire in an amicable manner to the good of the whole, being all united into one connected, compact system, without any thing superfluous or defective.

34. Accommodate yourself, and conform to those circumstances in which your lot has placed you, and love with sincerity those with whom you are by nature connected.

35. Every instrument and utensil is said to be properly constructed, when it performs that office for which it was intended, and this, when the artist who formed it is not present to direct its operation. But in the works of nature, the efficient cause is always present

present with and intimately united to the effect produced. We ought therefore particularly to reverence that sovereign Power, and believe that while we act conformably to his will, every thing will succeed according to our wishes, and will likewise coincide with the plan of the great Parent of the universe.

36. If you should consider any of those things which *are not in your* power, as really good or evil with regard to *you*, whenever you were exposed to the one or disappointed of the other, you would inevitably murmur against the Gods, or reproach and hate those men, whom you either know or suspect to have been the authors of your misfortune or of your disappointment. And indeed. we are often guilty of great injustice, when we do not attend to this distinction.

But if we would limit our ideas of good and evil to things *within our own power*, we should have no motive, either of complaint against the Gods, or of malice and ill-will against our fellow-creatures.

37. All mankind concur, (in some measure) either intentionally or without design, to promote the ends of Providence. Nay, “even in their sleep,” as Heraclitus, I think, observes, they carry on the same designs, and co-operate with other causes to produce the events which come to pass in the world. In short, the same plan is continually advancing, though by different means; and even he who complains and struggles against his fate, and seems to counteract the intentions of nature,\* is made an involuntary instrument in the hands of Providence for the same purpose.

Consider then in what class you yourself would be ranked; for the great Disposer of all events will infallibly make some proper use of you, and compel you to co-operate with the rest of mankind. Take heed, therefore, not to stand in need of the apology which is made for a ridiculous stanza in some

\* *Objurgat naturam, et Deos mavult emendare, quam seipsum.*  
SEN. Ep. 107.

“He finds fault with nature, and would rather reform the Gods than himself.”

Comedy

Comedy mentioned by Chrysippus, "that it was bad in itself, but contributed to the effect of the whole drama."

The sun cannot supply the place of the rain, nor does any one deity interfere in the province of another.† The stars likewise differ from each other in magnitude and splendour, yet all concur to one and the same salutary end.

38. If the Gods have decreed any thing concerning me and the incidents of my life, they have certainly done it for my good. For as one can hardly form an idea of a god that acts without design, so they could have no motive to do me any injury. For what benefit could accrue either to the gods or to the universe, (which is under their peculiar care) by my infelicity?

But although they should not have consulted any thing in my favour as an individual, yet they have undoubtedly consulted the good of the whole, in which my particular welfare is of consequence included.

† "Æsculapius does not perform the work of Ceres," the original says.

But if the Gods pay no regard to any thing here below, (which, however, it is *impious* to suppose) why then do we sacrifice or pray to them, or swear by them, or perform any other act, which implies that they are present and have a constant intercourse with mankind?

But even suppose that they never consult for or take the least care of us or our affairs, I am certainly at liberty to take care of myself and consult my own interest. Now it must be the interest of every being to act conformably to its own nature and constitution.

But I am by nature endued with reason, and formed for society and the service of the country where I am placed. Now, as the Emperor Antoninus, Rome is my city and my country; but, as a man, I am a citizen of the world. Whatever therefore is advantageous to these several communities must be so to me.

39. Whatever befalls individuals, it will in the end conduce to the good of the whole. This is sufficient for us to know: yet, as a  
further



further motive for our acquiescence; we may generally observe, that what is advantageous to one man, is also in some respects to many others. I take the word *advantageous* here in a *popular* sense, as applied to things *indifferent*, and not in the language of the Stoics.\*

40. In theatrical representations and other exhibitions of that kind, if the same things are too frequently repeated, they soon become insipid, and cease to please. Thus it is in common life: the same incidents perpetually recur, and from the same or similar causes. And how long will you continue to be amused by these repeated scenes of vanity?†

41. Consider frequently with yourself that men of all ranks, of all professions, and of all nations, have submitted to Fate. Extend your views to the earliest ages, and to the most distant tribes of mankind; they have all trodden the same path, in which we also

\* Who allowed nothing to be really *advantageous* but virtue; though they acknowledged external things to be *useful*.  
See the Preface.

† Remember, this is addressed to himself.

must



must follow them, and go whither so many great orators, so many venerable sages, (Heracitus, Pythagoras, Socrates,) so many heroes of ancient times, so many generals and kings of later ages, have gone before us.

Add to these, Eudoxus, Hipparchus, Archimedes, and other mathematicians of acute and sublime genius, of unwearied application, of various knowledge, and proud of their discoveries. Nay, those facetious gentlemen, who, like Menippus, made a jest of the frail and transitory state of human life: Consider, I say, that all these different characters are long since consigned to the gloomy mansions of the dead. And, indeed, what evil are they sensible of in their tombs? or what evil do they suffer, whose very names are buried in oblivion?

In short, there is nothing here much worth our attention, but to act on all occasions with a regard to truth and justice, and to live peaceably even with those who act with fraud and injustice.

42. When you would revive your spirits, recollect the virtues and good qualities  
of

of your friends and acquaintance : the diligence and attention of one ; the modesty of another ; the generosity of a third, and so on. For nothing is more soothing to the imagination, than that we are surrounded by friends in whom an assemblage of those good qualities displays itself. These then you should always retain in your memory, for your consolation and refreshment.

43. As you do not complain that you weigh only ten stone, suppose, instead of twenty, you have no more reason to be dissatisfied that your life is limited to a certain number of years and not further extended. As you are content with the dimensions of your person, you ought to be so with the space of life which is allotted you.

44. Let us, if we can, persuade others to be just and reasonable. But however *they* act, let *us* do what reason and justice require. If, indeed, any one should by force prevent your acting as you wish to do, you may at least have recourse to patience and equanimity ; and thus let one virtue supply the place of another. And remember, that you undertake

undertake the business with this reserve or proviso, That you do not pretend to impossibilities.\*

What then are your pretensions? Why, to do your best, and to act agreeably to reason. And this you may do in defiance of all opposition.

45. The vain man places his chief good in the opinion of other people; the voluptuous in his own sensual gratifications; but the wise man depends on his virtue alone for his happiness.

46. It is in our own power not to form a wrong opinion of any incident, and consequently, not to suffer any perturbation of mind†. For the things themselves have no power to regulate our judgment concerning them.

47. Accustom yourself to attend without distraction to what is spoken upon any sub-

\* See B. iv. §. 1.

† “That our opinions are in our own power” is a first principle of the Stoics; though I think they should have said, the *regulation* of them only is in our power.

ject;

ject; and enter, as far as is possible, into the very soul of him that is speaking.

48. That which is not for the interest of the whole hive, cannot be so for any single bee.

49. If the crew refuse to obey the commander of the vessel, or the patient his physician, will they, do you think, attend to any other person? Or, can the one promise a safe voyage to the passengers, or the other health to the sick?

50. To those who are afflicted with the jaundice, honey tastes bitter; and to those who are bitten by a mad dog, water is an object of horror: on the contrary, to children a little ball is a fine thing. Why then am I angry with any one for his taste of life? Has error, do you think, less power over the ignorant, than a little bile over a person in the jaundice, or the venomous saliva over one that is bitten by a mad dog?

51. No one can prevent you from living conformably to your own nature and reason; nor can any thing befall you contrary to the wise plan formed for the good of the universe.

52. Observe

52. Observe to what sort of people those who aim at popularity are forced to pay their court, and to what mean condescensions they must submit, and what poor returns they often meet with; and, after all, how soon will time overwhelm them, as it has so many others, and bury them in eternal oblivion!

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

THE  
MEDITATIONS

OF THE EMPEROR

*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.*





# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK VII.

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§. 1. **W**HAT is this wickedness, which you thus complain of? \* Nothing more than what you have already often seen. And indeed, to whatever comes to pass, you may apply the same remark—“It is what I have before often seen. And,

\* Our ancestors complained, we complain, and posterity will complain: That our manners are degenerate, that vice prevails, and that human affairs are rapidly tending to the very abyss of profligacy and wickedness. *Sed hominûm sunt ista, non temporûm.* SEN. Ep. 97.

“These are the faults of men, not of the times.”

P

in

in general, if you reflect on what passes around you, you will find that all the events of the present age are but what the histories of every age, of every city, and of every family, are full of. There is nothing new; the same things are commonly repeated, and are of short duration.

2. Those wise maxims [so essential to happiness] can never be entirely erased from your mind, unless the ideas which gave birth to them are extinguished; which, however, it is in your power (and it is very much your interest) frequently to rekindle in your mind. It is in my power to form a proper opinion of every incident; why then do I suffer any perturbation of mind? Nothing external has any coercive power over my sentiments. Be firm in this persuasion, and you will be happy. You will also have this further advantage, by thus recollecting past events, that you will, in some measure, live over again the time that is past.

3. A fondness for pompous professions, grand exhibitions on the stage, or skirmishes in the amphitheatre; the care of flocks and  
herds;

herds; these are some of the solemn amusements of mankind; and are of much the same importance as the quarrelling of dogs for a bone, of fishes catching at a bait, an hillock of ants in an uproar about carrying a grain of corn, of mice scampering across a room in a fright, or puppets danced on wires. Such is the bustle of human life!

Let us, however, amidst this ludicrous scene of things not be out of humour, but contemplate it with complacency and benevolence; remembering always to estimate the value of men by the utility of those employments on which they bestow their attention.

4. In every discourse, attend to what is said; and in every action, observe what is done. In the one, consider the end to which it is directed; in the other, the sense of the words and the views of the speaker.

5. Have I abilities for the business in hand, or not? If I have, I will make use of the talents, as given me by Providence for this purpose; if I have not, I will either resign the affair to one better qualified to

execute it; or if it be an indispensable part of my own duty, in that case, I will perform it to the best of my power; taking to my assistance one, who, under my directions, can accomplish it; that the public may not suffer by the opportunity being lost. For, whatever I do, either alone, or in conjunction with another, ought to have nothing in view but what is conducive to the good of the community.\*

6. How many much-celebrated men are now consigned to oblivion! how many also of those, who concurred in celebrating them, are themselves now entirely forgotten!

7. Be not ashamed to receive assistance, when necessary. Your business is to perform your duty, like a soldier on storming a town. Suppose you were lamed, and unable to mount the walls alone, would you refuse the assistance of your comrade?

8. Be not solicitous about future possibilities. You will encounter them when they approach, under the conduct of the same rea-

\* The Emperor's known conduct gives dignity to these sentiments.

son which you make use of on every present emergency.

9. All parts of the universe are interwoven with each other, and so linked together by nature, in a sacred bond of union, that no one thing is distinct from, or unconnected with, some other, the whole being regularly disposed, and forming this beautiful system which we call the world. For this world, though comprehending all things, is but *one*; as there is *one* God that pervades all things; *one* mass of matter out of which all things are formed; *one* law, the common reason of all intelligent creatures; one truth and perfection of all beings of the same kind and partaking of the same rational nature.

10. All material substances are continually returning to the general mass; all spiritual beings are soon reformed into the soul of the universe; and the very memory of all things is, with the same speed, buried in the gulph of time.

11. With a rational creature, to act according to nature and according to reason,\*

\* I have followed M. Casaubon in uniting these two sentences.



is the same thing; and act, therefore, in such a manner, that you may appear to have been *naturally* upright, rather than made so by *instruction* and discipline.

12. Such relation as the members of the same body have to each other, such have all rational beings, though not *literally united*,\* to each other. For they all concur to produce the same salutary effects. This reflection will be more intelligible, if you consider yourself as a necessary and essential *member* of the rational system, and not merely as an unconnected *part*: for, in the latter case you will not love mankind so cordially as you ought, nor do a generous action with the same disinterested satisfaction, but merely from a regard to decency,† and not from

\* He alludes to the distribution of bodies by some of the philosophers. Such as were united by nature; as an animal, a plant, &c. or by art, as an house, a ship, &c. or such as were only *nominally* united, the members being separate, as an army, a senate, &c. A *member* is a necessary part of some organized body or whole. SEN.

† Even the tyrant Phalaris (if he is the author of the Epistles) was not insensible to this pleasure. “I do not consider myself as having *conferred*, but *received* a favour, in what I have bestowed on a good man.” EPIST. 174



the pleasure of doing good, and adding to your own happiness.

13. It matters not much what external calamities befall those who are so weak as to be affected by them.\* If they feel their sufferings, they are at liberty to complain, if they choose to do it. For my part, unless I *think* those incidents that befall me to be really evil, I am not hurt; but it is in my own *power* to *think* of them as I please.†

14. However other people act or talk, my business is to be good. We should be as true to our nature as inanimate beings; an emerald, suppose, or gold, or purple. Let envy or malice do or say what they please, I shall still be an emerald, keep my colour, and shine on in defiance of them.

15. Is not the mind the cause of its own inquietude and perturbation? Does it not create its own fears and restless desires? If you imagine any one else is able to alarm or disturb the soul, let him make the experi-

• This sentiment is *not* borrowed from the Gospel.

† We should always bear in mind the *peculiar* doctrines of the Stoics.

ment,

ment. But it is in her own power to regulate her *opinions*, and not to yield to any external impressions. The body, perhaps, may feel and suffer, and is at liberty (if she can) to express her feelings;\* but the mind, though she may be assaulted by fear or grief, yet by forming proper opinions of those things will suffer no injury. The mind is self-sufficient to its own felicity, and wants no foreign aid, unless she creates those wants to herself: she is therefore free from perturbation and controul, unless, as was observed, she disturbs or controuls herself.

16. Happiness depends entirely on the good genius within us; that is, a mind rightly disposed. Begone then, Fancy, as you came, I beseech you; I want not your assistance. Yet, as you can plead custom for your intrusion, I will not be angry; but please to retire and leave me.

17. Why should any one be alarmed at the perpetual changes which take place in the world? For how can the world subsist

\* The text seems here a little perplexed.

without them or what is more agreeable or more friendly to the nature of the universe, or even to the convenience of mankind? How could your baths be heated, if the fuel were not changed into fire? Or how could you be nourished, unless your food were transformed by digestion? In short, nothing useful could be brought to perfection without those changes and transformations. Do not you therefore perceive, that the great *change* and dissolution which awaits your own person, is similar to those others, and equally necessary to the good of the whole.

18. All bodies are carried down as by a torrent, and reunited to the substance of the universe, being congenial, and co-operating with the whole, as our limbs do with each other. How many great philosophers, like Chrysippus, Socrates, or Epictetus, are already swallowed up in the gulph of time. The same fate, you may be assured, awaits every man and every thing around us.

I am only solicitous that I myself may do nothing contrary to the nature of man; nor act in any manner, or on any occasion, unbecoming my duty or my station. 19. The

19. The time is speedily approaching, when you will have forgotten every one, and every one will have forgotten you.

20. It is the peculiar excellence of man, to love even those who have offended him. This you will be disposed to do, if you reflect that the offender is allied to you; that he did it through ignorance, and, perhaps, involuntarily; and, moreover, that you will both soon go peaceably to your graves. But above all, consider, that he has not really injured you, as he could not render your mind, or governing part, the worse by his offence.

21. That plastick nature, which pervades and governs the universe, models a part, for instance, into the shape of an horse, which being dissolved, is transformed into a tree; then, perhaps, into an human creature or any other form; each of which, however, subsists but for a short space of time. Now there is nothing more formidable in the dissolution of this frame\* of ours than in its first construction.

\* Vessel, *κεῖρωτος*.

22. A stern and angry look is extremely unnatural; and if often assumed, will by degrees settle into an habit, and entirely destroy the beauty of the countenance, to such a degree as never to be recovered. This alone is sufficient to shew how unreasonable it is to indulge the passion of anger. For if any one is so far habituated to this indulgence as to have lost all sense of its deformity, he is not fit to live.

23. How soon will the great Governor of the universe change the present face of all things which you now behold, and from the same materials form other objects! and others again from those materials; so that the world may be perpetually renewed.

24. If any one has used you ill upon any occasion, consider immediately with what ideas of right and wrong he has probably acted thus. For when you have discovered that, you will pity him, and neither wonder at his conduct nor resent it.

It may happen, indeed, that you yourself have the same opinion, or something similar, of what is right; and therefore you  
ought



ought to pardon the delinquent. But suppose you differ in your sentiments; you ought at least to bear with patience and equanimity a man that offends you through ignorance and error.

25. Do not suffer your imagination to dwell upon the things which you want, but upon the advantages which you possess. And of those advantages, select those which afford you the greatest pleasure; and consider how earnestly you would wish for them, if they were not in your possession.

But beware, at the same time, when you contemplate them with satisfaction, that you do not so far habituate yourself to their enjoyment, that the want of them may disturb your tranquillity.

26. Wrap up yourself in your own virtue, and be independent. For a rational mind, that acts always with justice and integrity, is sufficient to its own happiness, and will enjoy a perpetual calm.

27. Correct your imagination, check the impetuosity of your passions, and confine your attention to the present time. Consider



der carefully the nature of every incident that happens either to yourself or to others. Divide the subject of your contemplation into its matter and form,\* or the efficient cause; reflect upon your last hour, and leave the faults of other people to their own consciences.

28. When others are speaking, let your attention keep pace with their words:—as to their actions, penetrate, if you can, into their tendency, and the motives of the agents.

29. Adorn your character with simplicity and modesty, and with indifference to external advantages, and things of no intrinsic value.

Love mankind, and be resigned to Providence: for, as the poet says,

“All things obey his laws.”

But suppose the elements move by their own power,† it is sufficient for us to know

\* This was a favourite distribution of the Stoics.

See B. iv. §. 21.

† The text is again corrupted, and the sense uncertain.

that

that every thing moves according to some fixed laws, with few exceptions.

30. By *death*, we shall either be dispersed in air, or reduced to atoms and empty space ; or, in short, we shall either be annihilated, or, what is more probable, translated to some other state of existence.

As for *pain*, if it be in the extreme and intolerable, it will destroy its subject ; if it be durable and lingering, you may learn to bear it. Your mind, in the mean time, or ruling principle, by forming a just opinion of the matter, will preserve its tranquillity, and suffer no degradation. As for those parts which are sensible of the pain, let them, if they can, remonstrate and complain.

With regard to *fame*, survey the intellects of those whose applause you are so ambitious of obtaining. How capricious are they in their averfions and their pursuits ! Besides, how transient is the splendour of fame ! For, as on the sea-shore, one hill of sand rolls over and buries the former ; so, in human life, the illustrious actions of the preceding age are eclipsed, and the memory of them obliterated, by those that succeed.

31. From

31. From a dialogue of Plato's. "He that is possessed of a true greatness of soul, who, in theory, has surveyed the whole extent of time, and has a thorough knowledge of nature; will such a one, do you think, consider human life as a matter of any great moment?—It is impossible that he should, replies his friend. Such a one, then, would not esteem death as any thing very formidable?—Not in the least, answers the other."†

32. A saying of Antisthenes.—"It is truly royal to *do* good, though you are abused for it."

33. It is shameful that the countenance should be obsequious to the will, conform to its dictates, and regulate itself as the mind directs; and yet, that the mind itself should not be under the controul, and be regulated by its own powers.

† "Death in itself is nothing; but we fear "

"To *be*, we know not *what*, we know not *where*."

DRYDEN.

34.\* "To

34.\* “To fret at life’s events becomes  
“not man ;

“For they regard not our complaints.”

35.§ “Give joy to me, and to th’ im-  
“mortal Gods.”

36.† Death mows down mortals like a  
“field of corn :

“Some fall each stroke, and others stand  
“awhile.”

37. “Tho’ me and mine the Gods have  
“overlook’d,

“In all things they are wise.—

“To do what’s right and just, at least,  
“is mine ;

“Nor meanly to bewail, nor fret, nor  
“fume.”

38. Extracts from Plato.—“To such a  
one I should make this just reply: You are

\* He seems to have transcribed these several sentences  
into his memorandum-book. The first is from the Belle-  
rophon of Euripides.

§ It is not known from what author this is ; but it  
seems applied to his son Commodus.—GATAKER quotes  
Solomon ; “A wise son makes a *glad* father.”

† From the Hypsipile of Euripides.

mistaken,

mistaken, Sir, if you think a man of any worth would not be indifferent in his choice, either to continue in life, or to die. His only concern would be, whether, in all he does, he acts justly or unjustly, and as becomes a good man, or the reverse."

39. From the same. "The truth of the case, O ye Athenians, is this: in whatever situation a man is placed, whether by his own choice, as thinking it most for his interest, or by the appointment of a superior; in that station it is his duty to remain, in spite of danger or death, and fear nothing in comparison with doing a base action."

40. From the same. "But consider, good Sir, whether every thing noble and virtuous consists in preserving your own life and that of your friends. For a truly wise and good man ought not to be too fond of life, nor too anxious to prolong it: but leaving that to Providence, and trusting to the trite maxim of the good women, 'that it is in vain to resist when our time is come,' let him consider in what manner he may manage, to the best  
Q advantage



advantage, that portion of life which is allotted him.”

41. Contemplate frequently the transmutation of the elements, and the course of the stars, and let your thoughts range with them through the boundless regions of space. These sublime speculations will purify the soul, and raise it above the groveling pursuits of this lower world.

42. This is a fine passage in Plato: “When we are discoursing of the nature of man, we should take a view of these terrestrial affairs, as from a lofty eminence, and observe the various combinations of society; their armies, their agriculture, trade, and commerce; their marriages, and other civil contracts; their births and burials; their feasting and their mourning; the hurry and tumult of their courts of judicature; countries laid waste; and the vast deserts of barbarous nations: what a confused mixture of various and discordant objects! Yet all concur to form this one regular system of the world.”

43. Survey the history of former ages, and the revolutions of so many empires,  
and



and you will be able, with some probability, to foretel all future events. For all things are of a fimilar kind, and cannot poffibly exceed the meafure and ftandard of thofe that are paft. Forty years, therefore, are as fair a fpecimen of human life as ten thoufand. For what can you fee more than you have already feen?

44.\* “ Whate’er has fprung from earth,  
 “ to earth returns;  
 “ And heav’nly things refume their na-  
 “ tive feat.”

And this is effected, either by diffolving the union by which the atoms are connected; or by difperſing the lifelefs elements into the maſs of the univerſe.

45. “ With caution tho’ we drink and eat,  
 “ To guard againſt approaching Fate;  
 “ When heav’n ſends forth the deſtin’d  
 “ gale,  
 “ To Lethe’s ſhore we’re forc’d to fail.†”

46. A man may be more expert than you in the gymnaf tick exerciſes; be it ſo: yet he

\* Eurip. Chryſip.

† From Euripides.

is not superior to you in the social virtues ; in generosity, in modesty, in patience under the accidents of life, or lenity towards the foibles of mankind.

47. Whenever you act conformably to that reason which is common to Gods and men, nothing disastrous can ensue. Where an action has the publick good to recommend it, and is properly conducted, there can be no reason to suspect any latent misfortune.

48. It is everywhere and always in your power piously to acquiesce under every dispensation, and to act justly towards every man, and to examine carefully every imagination ; that you may not be imposed upon by plausible appearances.

49. Be not impertinently inquisitive after other people's sentiments ; but direct your views whither nature would conduct you. The nature, I mean, of the universe, by resignation to the accidents which befall you ; and your own nature, by pointing out the duties of your station. But the duty of every one is to act suitably to his condition  
appointed

appointed by nature. Now, by nature, all other beings are appointed for the service of rational creatures, and rational creatures for the service of each other; as, in every instance, things of an inferior order are made for those which are more excellent, and more noble.

Now, the first and principal duty of man is to cultivate society, and promote the common interest. The second is, not brutishly to yield to the corporeal appetites. For it is the peculiar prerogative of the rational and intellectual principle to confine her motions within herself, and not to be subdued by the impressions of sense or appetite; for these are the mere animal parts of our constitution. But the intellectual principle justly claims the sovereignty, and ought not to submit to the appetites and passions; which were intended by nature for her service. The third privilege of a rational creature is, to be free from error and deception. §

§ This was the standard of perfection for their *imaginary* wise man; at which, though few perhaps ever arrived, yet, like the abstract idea of *beauty* in the mind of an artist, so excellent a model often raised them to an exalted pitch of virtue.

Let

Let your ruling principle secure these points, and proceed directly in her course; she is now in possession of all the perfection she is capable of.

50. We should consider ourselves each day as having finished our course, and lived our time: if any little unexpected addition be granted us, that also should be spent in living according to nature.

Be satisfied with whatever befalls you and is appointed by your destiny; for what can be more reasonable, or more conducive to your happiness, than what the Gods have decreed?

51. If any misfortune befall you, call to mind some former instances of those who have been in the same situation.\* With what clamour they uttered their complaints; with what surprise and what lamentations they bewailed their hard fate! But where

† The Emperor Julian relates a trick of Democritus, to laugh Darius out of his excessive grief for the death of his wife: “only write upon her tomb the names of three persons who have passed through life without any affliction, and your wife will immediately revive.”

JUL. Ep. 38.

are

are they now? They are gone, and we hear of them no more!

Why then should you imitate their impatience; and not rather leave such transports of grief to those who are themselves affected, and endeavour to affect others with such sensations? But you should apply yourself wholly to make a proper use of these incidents: which you will do, and they will be a subject for your improvement in virtue, if you give a proper attention to your conduct, and are true to yourself; and remember, that these accidents are indifferent in themselves, and prove good or bad, as you choose to make them.

52. Look into your own bosom; for you have there a fountain of happiness, if you will search for it, and suffer it to flow without interruption.

53. Be steady and composed in your gestures and the attitudes of your body: nor suffer yourself to appear in perpetual agitation.\* For, as the mind discovers an air

\* Laertius mentions a precept of Chilo: "Walk not in a hurry through the street; nor move your *band* when  
of



of good sense and decency in the countenance, you should let the body contribute to produce the same effect. Yet this must be done without any appearance of study or affectation.

54. The art of life resembles the art of wrestling rather than that of dancing; as it consists in guarding against contingencies and unforeseen attacks, (instead of regular, premeditated movements,) and in standing firm to prevent a fall.

55. Consider frequently with yourself, what sort of men *they* are whose approbation you wish to obtain, and the depth of their understandings. For, by these means, you will not much blame them if they should involuntarily offend you; and, when you contemplate the shallow sources of their opinions and of their affections, you will not be so solicitous about their good word.

56. It is observed by Plato, “that every one is unwilling to be debarred the truth.”

you are *speaking*; for it has the air of a madman.” Dr. JOHNSON is said to have disapproved of *action* in a speaker, perhaps from some peculiar prejudice.

The



The same may be applied to justice, temperance, benevolence, and to most of the moral virtues. This you should particularly bear in mind, which would make you more indulgent towards all men.

57. Under any bodily pain, let this be some consolation to you; that there is nothing base or immoral in it, and that it cannot in any respect injure or debase your governing principle—the mind: for it can neither affect it in its essence, or in its social capacity.

And, indeed, in most kinds of pain, the maxim of Epicurus may assist you, “that it cannot be both intolerable and durable, if you confine it to its natural limits, and do not add to your pain by fancy or opinion.”

Recollect also, that there are many sensations nearly allied to pain, and are really troublesome, though we do not attend to them: such as drowsiness, when we wish to keep awake; any violent heat; and want of appetite, or aversion to food. Now if, on these occasions, you are out of humour, you must confess, like the vulgar, that you are conquered, and must yield to pain.

58. Take

58. Take care not to behave towards the most inhuman as they too frequently behave towards their fellow-creatures.

59. How does it appear that Socrates was so illustrious a character, or superior to many others? For it is not enough to say, that Socrates died a more glorious death; or that he disputed with more skill against the Sophists; or that he patiently did duty,† in the coldest nights, in the Areopagus; or that he nobly slighted the orders of the thirty tyrants, when commanded to apprehend an innocent person;‡ or, what was objected to him by his enemies,\* (though no one can believe it) that he appeared in the streets with great solemnity and loftiness of countenance. These particulars, I say, are not sufficient to prove him so great a man. The most material enquiry is, how the mind of Socrates was disposed: “was he contented with the consciousness of acting justly towards mankind, and piously towards the

† The Athenians all served occasionally in the army.

‡ Leo of Salamis.

\* Aristophanes.

Gods?”

Gods ?” Did he ever express too much indignation against the wickedness of some, or meanly flatter the ignorance of others ? Did he ever murmur against the dispensations of Providence ; or think his own sufferings uncommonly severe and intolerable ? Or, lastly, did he ever suffer his mind to be too deeply affected by the impressions either of pleasure or pain ?

59. Nature has not made you a being of such a complicated system as not to be able to discern the limits of your duty, and, independently of others, perform what peculiarly belongs to you.

For it is possible for a man to be eminently virtuous, and yet a stranger to almost all mankind.

Observe, likewise, that a very few things are absolutely necessary to an happy life. And though you should despair of becoming a great logician, or a natural philosopher, yet it is certainly in your power to be free, modest, publick-spirited, and obedient to the will of the Gods.

60. You

60. You may live independently and with great satisfaction, though all mankind should conspire to molest you; nay, though wild beasts should seize upon your corporeal frame and tear you limb from limb. For what can prevent the mind, in the midst of these circumstances, from preserving her tranquillity, by forming a proper judgement, and making a proper use of the objects around her? In judging of any object that attacks her, she can say, "I know what you really are, though you appear in a questionable shape." And, with regard to the use he is to make of any occurrence, he will say, "This is the very thing I expected." For every incident is to me an occasion of practising some virtue, moral or social; or of performing some duty, either to God or to man. . For whatever comes to pass, relates either to the one or to the other; and is neither uncommon nor difficult, but familiar and easy to be managed to some good purpose.

61. It is the perfection of virtue to spend every day as if it were your last; and neither  
act

act with precipitation, nor with indolence, nor with insincerity.

62. Though the Gods are immortal, and must necessarily bear with the wickedness of mankind through endless ages, they do not lose their patience; but even extend their providential care over them on all occasions. And do you, who are just going off the stage of life, and are yourself one of these wicked mortals, despair of a reformation?

It is highly ridiculous not to get rid of our own frailties, which is in our power; and shew such an abhorrence, and endeavour to reform those of other people, which is not in our power.

63. Whatever is neither agreeable to your reason, or conducive to the benefit of society, you may justly consider as beneath your attention.

64. When you have done a favour to any one, and he has profited by your kindness, why should you (as some† silly people do) look any further; either for the reputation of having done a generous action,

† Οἱ μωροί, the fools.



or for a return from the person whom you have obliged ?

No one is ever weary of receiving favours from their friends. Now it is doing yourself a favour, to act conformably to the dictates of nature. Be not weary, therefore, of doing good to others, when, by that means, you are really serving yourself.

65. The Universal Nature, at a certain period of time, exerted its power in producing this world. But whatever now comes to pass, is either the necessary consequence of the original plan ; or the Governor of the world acted at random in his principal design. Now to reflect on the absurdity of this supposition, ought to make you easy under all the events of life.

END OF THE SEVENTH BOOK.



# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK VIII.

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§. 1. **T**HIS also should check your vanity, that you have not yet been able, from your youth at least, to live the life of a philosopher. For it is evident, not only to many others, but to yourself likewise; how far you are from perfection in true wisdom and virtue. Your measures therefore are disconcerted; so that it is not easy for you to obtain even the *reputation* of being a philosopher, as your very station and plan of life militate against your wishes in that respect.

If therefore you have discovered in what the thing itself really consists, never regard the reputation of it; but let it suffice to spend the rest of your life as reason and nature dictate. Examine carefully then what  
they

they require, and let nothing divert you from the pursuit. For you are conscious how widely you have hitherto wandered from the right path; and have not yet discovered the road to virtue and happiness. It does by no means consist in fine reasoning and syllogisms,\* nor in wealth, or fame, or sensual pleasure. Where then is it to be found? In performing the duties essential to man. How then shall he perform them? By adopting proper principles and maxims to regulate his conduct. What maxims are those, you will say? Such as relate to the nature of good and evil; which teach us that nothing is really *good* for man, but what promotes the virtues of justice, temperance, fortitude, and independence; and nothing evil, but what leads to the contrary vices.

2. In every action, ask yourself this question, "How will this probably affect me? Shall I not repent of it hereafter? The time is approaching, when I shall be gone,

\* Which the Stoics were ridiculously fond of, as has before been observed.

and every thing around me disappear. If, therefore, the affair in hand be suitable to a rational creature, and one born for society, and acting under the same law with the Gods themselves, what further need I inquire?"

3. What are Alexander, Julius Cæsar, and Pompey, compared to Diogenes, Heraclitus, and Socrates? These philosophers saw things as they really were; understood their causes, their natures, and essences; and acted upon those principles.

As for those great heroes, what a variety of affairs were they solicitous about! and what slaves were they to their exalted rank and their ambition!

4. Let not the wickedness of the world disconcert you! Mankind will act precisely as they have done, though you should *burst* yourself with indignation and remonstrating against their absurdity.

5. Let it be a principal part of your philosophy to preserve your tranquillity: for all things come to pass by the direction of Providence. And, in a few years, you your-

R

self

self must leave this world, as Hadrian and Augustus have done before you.

In the next place, consider the affair in its proper light, and you will find, that your whole business here is to be a good man. Whatever the nature of man therefore requires of you, perform it strenuously and with assiduity; and whatever justice dictates, on every occasion, speak it boldly, but with good-nature, modesty, and sincerity.

6. Providence, or the Universal Nature, seems continually employed in varying the face of things; transferring its favours from one object to another, and metamorphosing the material world into different forms. All things subsist by change; yet these changes are so uniform in their progress, that you need not fear lest any thing unprecedented should be *your* particular lot; for all things are administered with the utmost equity and impartiality.

7. Every being is contented, when employed in the duties, and in possession of the prosperity and perfection which belong to its nature. Now our rational nature is in  
that

that prosperous state, when, in the ideas which are presented to us, we never assent to what is false, or what is obscure; when we direct all our exertions to the good of the community; when we confine our desires and our aversions to objects within our own power; and, lastly, when we rest satisfied with all the dispensations of Providence.

For, indeed, our rational soul is a part of the soul of the universe, as a leaf is a part of the tree which produces it; with this difference only, that a leaf is a part of nature, void of sense and of reason, and liable to be obstructed in its operations; whereas the soul of man is a part of an independent, intelligent, and just Being; a being, who allots to every creature a due proportion of time, of substance, of force, of fortunate circumstances, according to its dignity and rank in the creation. Of this you will be sensible, not by considering any one object separately in any one respect, but by comparing the whole of one object collectively, with the whole of any other.



8. You wish to be a *philosopher*, you say, but have not leisure to *read*.<sup>\*</sup> But it is in your power not to behave haughtily or injuriously to any one. It is in your power to be superior to the blandishments of pleasure, or the sense of pain; to look down with contempt on fame and glory. You can forbear to resent ingratitude, and insensibility of the favours you have conferred; nay, you can even extend your tender *concern* for people of that unhappy description.

9. Let no one hear you venting commonplace reflections on a court life, or complaining of your own.

10. Repentance is the reproach of a man's conscience for having neglected something advantageous. Now, whatever is morally good must necessarily be advantageous, and ought to be the concern of a good and virtuous man. But no good or virtuous man ever repented of having neglected or

\* *Εἰς ἑαυτὸν*, addressed to himself. Observe this, once for all: in every page the good Emperor inculcates the Christian duties, to God, our neighbour, and ourselves.



sighted any *sensual* pleasure. It is evident, therefore, that such pleasure is not really good or advantageous.

11. In contemplating any object, we should enquire what it is in its own nature and œconomy; what is its essence and material substance; by whom and for what it was formed; what is its rank and importance in the system of the world; and how long it is destined to exist in its present situation.†

12. When you are drowsy in a morning, and find a reluctance to rise, recollect that you were born for the duties of society, and that such actions are suitable to human nature; whereas sleeping is common to you with the brute creation.

Now those actions which are suitable to the nature of any being, must be peculiarly incumbent on such being, and, by custom, will become most agreeable.

13. In every idea which presents itself to your mind, make it a constant rule to

† This seems a favourite precept with the Stoics; as he often repeats it.

enquire

enquire what is its true nature, physical or moral; and scrutinize it, to the best of your power, by the rules of reason and philosophy.†

14. When you are to meet or converse with any one, on any occasion, let your first reflection be, what are this man's opinions about good and evil? For if he considers pleasure and pain, and the causes of them, in that vulgar light; if he considers fame or ignominy, life or death, as such, and not as indifferent to a wise man, we cannot wonder, or think it any thing extraordinary, that such a man should act as he does; for indeed, it is morally impossible he should act otherwise.

15. Consider how ridiculous it would be to express any surprise that a fig-tree should produce figs. It would be no less so to wonder that the world should produce vice

† Seneca says, "That most authors in his time divided philosophy into three parts; *moral*, *natural*, and *rational*, or logical. The first regulated the affections of the mind; the second investigated the nature of things; the third prevented our being imposed upon by mere words and false reasoning." &c. Epist. 89.

and folly, in which it is so fruitful; or, for a physician to wonder that his patient was in a fever; or, for the master of a vessel, that he met with a contrary wind.

16. Never think it any disgrace to change your opinion, and correct an error; it being equally liberal, and the part of an ingenuous mind, as to follow any one that would direct you the right road. It is still your own act, and you only pursue your first intention; to discover the truth, and to arrive at the point proposed.

17. If it is in your power, either to do or to omit what you complain of, why do you act thus? If it is not in your own power, whom do you blame, the Gods or chance? To blame either is the part of a madman. Let us then complain of no one. If it is in your power to rectify what is amiss, do so; if it is not, to what purpose should you complain? For, to do any thing in vain, is the height of folly.

18. Nothing that dies, is lost to the universe, or annihilated. But, if it remains here, it undergoes some change, and is resolved

solved into its proper elements.\* Now the same elements which compose the rest of the world make a part of your person; yet those undergo many changes, and do not murmur or repine.

19. Every thing in nature was produced for some wise end: every plant and animal; a vine, an horse, for instance. Nay, there is nothing wonderful in this: the sun, and all the celestial bodies, proclaim the end for which they were created.

We may venture therefore to ask, for what you were made? To take your pleasure and amuse yourself?—Common sense revolts at the idea!†

\* I cannot but take notice of a silly expression of our modern news-writers. When a man hangs or drowns himself, they call it “putting an end to his *existence*.” It would be happy for him if he did so: but an heathen philosopher might teach these *good Christians* better.

† These are sentiments which cannot be too frequently inculcated. Too many of our own countrymen of fortune, both young and old, wander up and down, to the astonishment of all Europe; (dying with *ennui*, or sick of life) merely for *amusement*, and want of some useful pursuit. See Dr. MOORE’s excellent “Views of Society.”

20. Nature

20. Nature has predetermined the end, as well as the beginning and continuance of every creature; as he who throws a ball, directs it to some definite point: now what is the ball the better for mounting in the air, or the worse for descending, or even falling to the earth? The same reasoning may be applied to the swelling or breaking of a bubble of water; or to the burning or extinguishing a lamp; or any other emblem of human life.

21. Look beneath the surface, and examine the internal parts of this body which you are so proud of. Consider what it is at present; what it will be in old age, or in a morbid state, and when it becomes a lifeless corpse.

In general, to shew the vanity of all human distinctions, the time is speedily approaching, when the panegyrist, and the subject of his encomiums, he that records, and he that performs great exploits, will be buried in oblivion.

Consider likewise, that these celebrated transactions are confined to this little corner  
of



of the world. Neither here are all of the same opinion concerning these things, nor any one man consistently so. Indeed, this whole globe is but a mere point.

22. Give your whole attention to the affair now in hand; whether it be any opinion, or any action, or any speech that is delivered. By a neglect of this kind you deservedly suffer; because, instead of correcting your error to-day, you chose to defer it till to-morrow.†

23. Shall I do this? Yes, I certainly will do it, if it be conducive to the welfare of mankind. Does any uncommon accident befall me? I acquiesce in it, as being the appointment of the Gods, the original of all things, and as connected with the chain of events established by Fate.

24. In what light does bathing appear to you? \* If you analyse it, though a necessary,  
it

† The text here is somewhat dubious.

\* The Emperor probably made this reflection, while his servant was scraping him with the strigil.

When people get an habit of moralizing, they are apt to carry it to a ridiculous extreme; as the good Dr.

WATTS



it is rather a dirty and indelicate business : such indeed, if traced to the bottom, are most of the functions of human life, and every object around us.

25. Lucilla† has buried her husband Verus, and may *perhaps* soon follow him.† Secunda buried Maximus,\* and survived him but a short time. Thus it fared with Antoninus and Faustina ; with Celer§ and the Emperor Hadrian.

This is the lot of mortality ! Where are now those sagacious prognosticators, who with such solemnity foretold the fate of others ? Where are those acute philosophers,

WATTS has, I think, a hymn for a child “ on putting on a new coat,” &c. &c.

† Daughter of M. Aurelius, and married to Verus, his Colleague in the Empire.

† M. Casaubon, Gataker, and Collier, have all been inattentive here to the truth of history. Lucilla survived her father M. Aurelius, and was put to death by her brother Commodus, for a conspiracy, and not yielding the precedence to his Empress Crispina.

\* A stoic philosopher. See b. i. §. 15.

§ A rhetorician, master to M. Aurelius and L. Verus.

Charax,

Charax, Demetrius the Platonist,\* and Eudemon? They, and many others such, were but of a day's continuance, and are long since defunct. Some of them left no trace of their memory behind them. The histories of some of them are dwindled into fables, and some have now not even that distinction.

Remember, therefore, the fate of these men, and be assured that your corporeal frame will be dissolved by death, and reduced to its original elements; and your spiritual part either extinguished, or translated to some other state of existence.

26. The chief happiness of man consists in performing the duties peculiar to man. Now, some of the principal of these are, benevolence towards our fellow-creatures; a command over our sensual appetites; the distinguishing plausible appearances from truth; and the contemplation of nature and her operations.

We all stand in three principal relations: the first regards our personal conduct;\* the

\* See b. xii. §. 2.

second,

second, the Divine Nature ; (the original cause of all events) the third, our intercourse with our fellow-creatures.

27. If pain is an evil, it must affect either the body or the soul. If the body suffers, why is it not capable of expressing its feelings? As to the soul, she can preserve a serenity and a calm, and not think it an evil. For all our opinions and inclinations, our desires and aversions, are seated within the soul, where no evil can approach without our permission.

28. Banish from your imagination all erroneous ideas, and resolve thus with yourself: "It is now in my own power, that my mind shall harbour no wickedness, no vicious appetite, nor suffer any kind of perturbation; to view every object in its true light, and treat every thing according to its real importance." Remember, that nature has given you this peculiar privilege.

29. Whether you are to speak in the senate, or on any private occasion, do it with modesty and dignity, rather than eloquently ; but, at all events, let your discourse be perspicuous, rational, and sincere.

30. The

30. The whole court of Augustus; his wife, his daughter, his grand-children, his sister, his son-in-law Agrippa; in short, all his relations, friends, and acquaintance; his favourites, Arius the philosopher, and Mæcenas; his physicians, his priests; have all yielded to fate!

From individuals you may proceed to whole families; that of Pompey the Great,† for instance: so that the monumental inscription, “*He was the last of his family,*” may frequently be applied with great propriety.

Consider now, with what anxiety the ancestors of these men strove to have some successor to survive them; though, it is evident, there must at length be a period to their hopes, and the family be extinct.

31. You should endeavour to regulate your whole life by one scale of duty; and, if every action comes as near to the standard as the circumstances admit, you may rest contented: nor can any one prevent your acting thus. “Yet some external cause,” you

† Some commentators have thought he alluded to the destruction of the city of Pompeii; though the context will not admit of that supposition. will

will say, “ may intervene, and thwart your intention.” But nothing can prevent your acting with justice, moderation, and honour.

Still you will say, “ Some unforeseen powerful cause may operate, and absolutely disappoint my good designs.”\*

In that case, do not be disconcerted ; but proceed calmly to some other object, which may answer your purpose, and tend equally to your improvement in virtue, and the regulating your conduct in the manner I have been inculcating.

32. Receive any good fortune which falls to your lot, without being too much elated ; and resign it, if necessary, without being dejected.

33. If (in an engagement, suppose) you have seen a limb chopped off, and lying separately from the body ; such, in some measure, do you make yourself, when, at any time, you are dissatisfied with those events which happen to all mankind, and cut off yourself, and set up a separate interest from the rest of the community. You

\* The original is expressed passively, but the sense is the same.



dismember and dissolve that union, which was the intention of nature; and suffer an amputation from the body, of which you were a part.

This, however, man has to boast of; that he<sup>n</sup> may again† *unite* himself to the whole body: and this is a privilege granted to no other part of the creation. Consider then the goodness of Providence in this respect, who has originally united him, and given him all the privileges of society; and if, by his own folly, he breaks off from that union, he has it in his power, by his good behaviour, to reunite himself, and again recover the advantages of his relation to the whole.

34. Amongst other faculties bestowed upon every rational creature by the Sovereign of the universe, they have this also; that, as Providence can overrule and convert every event which seems to counteract its designs, and render them conducive to

† *Licet in viam reverti, licet in integram restitui.*

SEN. Ep. 98.

its



its general plan ; so every rational creature has it in its power to manage every impediment that seems to obstruct its progress, and make it promote the end proposed.

35. Do not perplex yourself with contemplating the whole prospect, and providing against the possible cross events, of your life, but limit your concern to the present time ; and, on every unlucky incident, ask yourself, “ what there is in the affair, which, with a proper resolution, cannot easily be born and submitted to ? ” and then you will blush at your own weakness.

Then make this further reflection, that it is not any thing future, or past, that troubles you, but the whole is confined to the present object. Now this will wonderfully diminish your concern, when circumscribed within its real bounds.\* And you may justly charge yourself with cowardice, if you cannot submit with patience to so trifling an evil.

\* The translator has experienced the utility of this precept on many irksome occasions.

36. Does Panthea§ or Pergamus still watch at the tomb of Verus? or Chabrias and Diotimus at that of Hadrian? That would be ridiculous indeed! But, suppose they did, would those princes be sensible of their respect? or, if they were sensible of it, what pleasure would it give them? or, if they *were* pleased with it, would these attendants be immortal? On the contrary, are not they doomed to old age and to death, as well as those whom they attend? And what will those princes do, when their attendants are dead? This ceremony *must* end at last in dust and ashes.†

37. If you value yourself on your sagacity, make use of it in forming right judgments of things.‡

38. In the œconomy of rational beings, I see no virtue that is opposed to, or that

§ As some MSS. read *Cyrus*, instead of *Verus*, this was supposed to be the Panthea mentioned by Xenophon; but Salmatius has properly restored *Verus* to the text.

Something of this ceremony has prevailed in all ages of the world.

† The ideas, in the original, are more disgusting.

‡ Locus conclamatus! says GATAKER. places

places any restriction upon, the practice of justice; but I see temperance opposed as a restraint upon pleasure.

39. If you can separate your opinion of the matter from what seems to torment you, you *yourself* will be safe from injury. But “who is *myself*?” you will say. Why, your reason. “But I do not consist entirely of reason.” Well, grant it: let your *reason*, however, make herself easy; and, if there be any other part of you, that can be *sensible* of any chagrin, leave it to its own opinion and sense of the matter.

40. Any check upon our senses, or our appetites, affects our animal nature; whatever interrupts our growth, or our corporeal functions, belongs to our vegetative nature. In like manner, whatever obstructs our mind in its exertions, is peculiar to our rational or intellectual nature.

Now apply this to your own person.—Does pain or pleasure attack or solicit you? Let your senses look to that. Are you interrupted in any pursuit? If you engaged in it, without any *exception* or *reserve*§ for

§ See B. iv. §. 1.

possible contingencies, you must take the consequences, and suffer even in your rational part: but, if you undertook it conditionally, and with a proper sense of the common accidents of life, you cannot be really injured or disappointed. Nothing external can interrupt the soul in her peculiar operations; neither fire, nor sword, nor tyrant, nor calumny, can touch her. She is a sphere,† perfectly round and complete in herself, and not easily obstructed in her motions.

41. I am determined not to injure or grieve myself, who never grieved or injured any other person.

42. Every one has something which gives him peculiar pleasure and satisfaction. For my part, my happiness consists in a sound mind, free from any unreasonable aversion to any man, or to any event which is common to mankind; that views with candour, and receives with complacency, every thing which occurs, and treats it in proportion to its dignity and importance.

† Fortis, et in seipso totus teres atq; rotundus. HOR.

43. Employ

43. Employ the present time to your own satisfaction. Those who are so solicitous about a posthumous fame, do not consider, that posterity will be equally as unreasonable and unjust, as those with whom they are now so much dissatisfied; and that they also will be mortal, as you are: and what does it concern you, in what manner they shall speak of you, or what opinion they shall form of you?

44. Take me, and transport me whithersoever you please; I shall still preserve a quiet conscience and a contented mind, while I discharge the duties appendant to my situation.

45. Is this misfortune, then, of consequence sufficient to disturb my mind, or degrade her from her rank? To make me behave in a mean, abject, servile manner; and shrink from my duty, through fear? What can you discover in this affair to justify such meanness?

Nothing can happen to any man, but such accidents as are common to human nature; as nothing can affect an ox, a vine,



or even a stone, but what is consonant to their respective natures.

If, therefore, nothing befall you but what is usual and natural, why are you thus disconcerted? For, you may be certain, no evil can be intolerable, which is the common lot of our being.

46. If you are uneasy on account of any thing external, be assured, it is not the thing itself that disturbs you, but your *opinion* concerning it. Now this opinion it is in your own power to get rid of, if you please.

But if any thing in your own conduct or disposition displeases or grieves you, who can prevent you from rectifying your opinions, [which are the source of your misconduct?]

But further; if you are vexed with yourself, that you cannot perform effectually what, you are sensible, sound morality enjoins, why do you not exert yourself more strenuously, rather than be uneasy on that account? But some more powerful cause perhaps overrules and prevents you? Never vex yourself on that account; since the cause  
of

of your not succeeding is not in your own power. “But life is not worth preserving, in such circumstances,” you say. Then quit it; but as calmly as you would do, if you had been more successful; and in charity with those who have frustrated your endeavours.

47. Remember that the mind, or ruling faculty, is invincible; when retiring within herself, she is satisfied with the consciousness, that she cannot be forced to act against her will, though she has only an obstinate† resolution to support her. How irresistible must she be then, when, fortified by reason, she forms a judgement of things as they essentially are?

A soul, free from the tumults of passion, is an impregnable fortress, in which a man may take refuge, and defy all the powers on earth to enslave him. He that does not see this must be very ignorant; and he who sees it, and does not avail himself of this privilege, must be very unhappy.

† He here probably alludes to that *obstinacy* which was imputed to the Christians.

B. xii. §. 3.

48. Does

48. Do not aggravate any disagreeable incident, by adding imaginary circumstances to what appearance at first suggested. You are told, for instance, that some one has spoken ill of you in your absence. This is the whole of the intelligence. But you were not told that you were injured by this scandal. I see that my child is sick ; thus far my senses inform me : but I do not see that he is in any danger.

In this manner, confine your thoughts to the first impressions, and do not make any addition of possible evils, and you will find much less detriment, on any occasion, than you apprehended : or, if you will comment on any incident, let it be like one that is acquainted with all that can befall a wise man in this world.

49. Is the cucumber which you are eating, bitter ? let it alone. Are there thorns in the path where you are walking ? avoid them. This is sufficient for your particular purpose. But do not peevishly ask, “ why are such things permitted in the world ? ” For a naturalist would laugh at you ; and  
with

with as much reason as a carpenter or a tailor would do, if you should blame them for having shavings or shreds in their respective shops; yet they have room enough to dispose of these useless remnants. But the universal nature has no space separate from herself. And what is more admirable in her œconomy, whereas she has circumscribed herself within certain limits, whatever she observes liable to corruption, or to become old and useless, in one shape, she converts it into her own substance, and from thence produces new forms of things; so that she has no need of any extraneous materials, nor wants any vacant space for her refuse; but remains contented within her own sphere, and performs her operations with her own materials, and by her own skill.†

50. Be not dilatory or wavering in your proceedings; nor confused and perplexed in your conversation; nor rambling and inco-

† He speaks according to the confused notions of a *plastic* nature; though the good Emperor seems really to have believed the world to have been produced by an intelligent First Cause.

herent in your thoughts; nor let your mind be hurried into sudden transports, either of grief or joy; neither embarrass yourself with a multiplicity of unnecessary employments.

Suppose they put you to death, cut you limb from limb, or load you with execrations. This cannot affect your mind, nor prevent it from remaining pure, prudent, temperate, and just: as, if any one standing near a sweet, limpid fountain, should load it with foul language, the fountain never ceases to pour out the same clear water for the thirsty to drink. Nay, should he throw dirt or filth into the stream, it soon washes it away and refines itself, and retains not the least tincture of impurity or contamination.

How then must you contrive to preserve your mind like the perennial stream, and prevent its becoming a stagnant puddle? why, by maintaining its native freedom and independence, joined with benevolence, modesty, and simplicity.\*

\* GATAKER quotes a beautiful passage here from SENECA de Benef. l. vii. 31.



51. He who does not know that this world is a regular system, does not know in what situation he himself is. And he who is ignorant for what end he was made, does not know what he really is, or what the world is. Now, he that is deficient in either of these particulars, cannot know for what end he was created. What then do you think of any man, who courts the applause, or fears the censures of such mortals, who neither know *where* they are, nor *what* they are?

52. Are you ambitious of being praised by a man, who perhaps curses himself three or four times every hour in the day? or, of pleasing him, who is never pleased with himself? For, how can he be pleased with himself, who is continually repenting of all the actions of his life?

53. Be not contented merely to breathe the surrounding air; but endeavour to assimilate yourself and be united to that omnipresent, intelligent Being, who surrounds and comprehends the whole universe. For that intelligent Power is no less universally diffused, and pervades every soul fitted to  
receive

receive him, than the vital air does those bodies which are capable of breathing.

54. My will or choice is no more dependant on the will or choice of another, than my soul or body is on that of any other. For, though we are born for the mutual benefit and assistance of each other; yet our mind, or ruling principle, is possessed of an exclusive sovereignty within its own sphere: for, otherwise, the misconduct of my neighbour might be a misfortune to me. But Providence has so ordered it, that it should not be in the power of another to make me unhappy.

55. The sun is apparently every where diffused, yet its beams are never exhausted. For that diffusion is only the extension of its rays, (which, indeed, derive their Greek name from *extension*.) ‡

Now the nature of these rays may be discovered, by admitting a stream of them from the sun, through a slender passage,

‡ The Stoics were fond of etymology, as well as of logic. *Ἀκτῖνες*; ab *ἐκτείνεσθαι*, very improbable. Cicero sometimes imitates this taste ridiculously enough.

into

into a dark room. For here the rays proceed in a right line, till they meet with some solid body, which reflects them, and stops their progress. There the light remains, without sliding off from the illumined object.

In this manner should your understanding diffuse itself to all around:† not exhausting, but extending its influence, though it may meet with opposition; yet proceeding without noise or violence, and enlightening all that will admit its beams: as for those who will not, they only deprive themselves of its light by their resistance.

56. He who fears death, either fears that he shall be deprived of all sense, or that he shall have different sensations.‡ Now, if you lose all sensation, you will not be sensible of any pain or sufferings: if you are endowed

† From an *habit* of moralising, (as I have observed) the good Emperor *labours* to extract a moral from a lecture on optics.

‡ Bishop Warburton quotes this section, to prove that the Stoics did not believe the immortality of the soul.

Div. Leg. b. iii. §. 3.

See the whole third Book, on the opinion of the philosophers.

with other senses, you will become another creature, and will not cease to live as such.

57. Men were born for the service and benefit of each other. Either teach them this obvious truth, or bear with their ignorance.

58. The mind, though, like the arrow, directed at some mark, is different in this respect. For, though suspended through caution, or turned aside for deliberation, it still proceeds *directly* towards the object in view.

59. Endeavour to penetrate into the *mind* of every one with whom you converse; and give every one the same liberty with you. §

§ GATAKER applies this to a free description of each other's opinions. See EPICTET. Dissert. l. iii. c. 9. Mrs. CARTER's Translation.

END OF THE EIGHTH BOOK.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK IX.

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§. 1. **H**E that acts unjustly, acts impiously. For God, or the Universal Nature, having produced all rational creatures to be mutually serviceable to each other, according to their respective merits, and by no means to injure each other; he who violates this first principle of nature, prophanely insults the most antient of all Deities. For this Universal Nature is the cause of all things that exist; which are connected with each other by mutual friendship and alliance.

This nature is likewise sometimes styled *truth*, being the cause and original of all truths. He, therefore, that tells a wilful lie, acts also impiously, as he acts unjustly in deceiving his neighbour; and even he who  
violates



violates the truth through ignorance, is, in some measure, liable to the same charge; as he departs from nature's intention, and, as far as is in his power, breaks in upon the order and harmony of the universe, and promotes the interest of error, in opposition to truth; and, by neglecting those talents which he had received from nature, he can hardly distinguish truth from falsehood.

Moreover, he who pursues pleasure, as if it were really good, or flies from pain, as if it were evil, he also is guilty of impiety. For he that is thus disposed, must necessarily complain often of the dispensations of Providence, as distributing its favours to the wicked and to the virtuous, without regard to their respective deserts; the wicked frequently abounding in pleasures, and in the means of procuring them, and the virtuous, on the contrary, being harraßed with pain, and other afflictive circumstances.

Nay, he that is uneasy under affliction, is uneasy at what must necessarily exist in the world. This uneasiness, then, is a degree of impiety: and he who is too eager in his  
pursuit

purfuit of pleasures, will not abftain from injuftice to procure them. This is manifefly impious.

In fhort, as nature herfelf feems to view with indifference profperity and adverfity, (as ſhe certainly does, or ſhe would not produce them) fo he who would follow nature as his guide, ought to do the fame. He, therefore, that does not thus imitate nature, in her indifference with regard to pleasure or pain, honour or difgrace, life or death; he alfo is evidently guilty of a degree of impiety.

But when I fay, in a popular ſenſe, that nature makes uſe of theſe things indifferently; I mean, that they come to paſs indifferently, in conſequence of that connected ſeries of events, which ſucceed one another according to the original plan of Providence, when nature applied herſelf to range in order the ſyſtem of the univerſe; having formed to herſelf certain ideas of future things, and eſtabliſhed thoſe prolific powers, which, in due ſucceſſion, were to bring forth and produce the various beings, changes,

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and

and revolutions, which were to take place in the several ages of the world.

2. It were certainly more desirable for a man to go out of the world without the least stain of falsehood, dissimulation, luxury, or pride; but when any one is thoroughly tainted with these vices, his next wish should be, to expire, rather than live a brutish life, and wallow in his vices. Has not experience yet taught you to fly from the plague? For the infection of the soul is a plague much more malignant than that of the ambient air. For the latter is only fatal to our animal nature, as such; the former is fatal to our rational nature, as we are men.

3. Do not think too lightly of death; yet, when it arrives, meet it with complacency, as one of the things appointed by nature. For our dissolution is equally consonant to the common course of nature, as our youth or our old age; our growing up and arriving at manhood; as our breeding our teeth, our beards, or our grey hairs; to be pregnant, or to bring forth children; and, in short, as any of the other natural functions,  
which

which the different seasons of life bring with them.

A man, therefore, that acts rationally, will neither rush precipitately upon death, nor affect to despise it; but wait for it, as one of the operations of nature: and, in the same manner as you wait with patience till the child in embryo comes regularly to its birth, so ought you to wait for the season, when the soul in maturity drops from its integument of flesh into another state of existence. But (if you would have a popular remedy, yet what may prove a cordial, against the fear of death) it will greatly contribute to this end, if you consider what sort of a world you are to leave, and with what sort of characters you will be no longer conversant.† Not that you are to quarrel with mankind; but to treat them kindly, and consult their welfare. Yet still remember, that you are to be separated from men of very different sentiments from your own.

† The goodness of this amiable Prince's heart continually gets the better of his stoical severity.

For the only motive which could call you back, and detain you in this life, would be, if you were so happy as to live with those of the same opinions and the same pursuits with yourself. But, instead of that, you now see what disturbance arises from the discordant sentiments of those with whom we are forced to converse: so that we may exclaim, “*O death, make haste to my relief; lest, amidst this confusion of opinions, I forget myself, and depart from my own principles!*”\*

4. He that commits a crime, is guilty of an offence against his own interest; and he that acts unjustly, injures himself: for to make himself a bad man, is an essential injury. A man is as often guilty of injustice by omitting to do what he ought, as by doing what he ought not to do.

5. If you form a proper judgement on every occurrence that presents itself; if your present actions are conducive to the publick good; if, in your present disposition, you

\* GATAKER calls this a proverbial expression; though it seems to be originally some tragick exclamation.

cheerfully



cheerfully acquiesce in every dispensation of the Great Cause of all things; it is sufficient; do not perplex yourself with what is future.

6. Correct your imagination; restrain the impetuosity of your passions; subdue your appetites; and keep your mind free, and mistress of her own operations.

7. All brute animals partake of the same vital soul, as all rational creatures do of the same intelligent soul. And all terrestrial bodies have one common earth; and all that are capable of sight and vital existence enjoy the same light, and breathe the same air; so that all *are equally in possession of the great privileges of nature.*

8. Things which partake of the same common nature, have a mutual tendency to unite. All earthly bodies gravitate towards the earth; the globules of water and air, if not prevented by some external force, flow together by a reciprocal attraction; fire ascends to its elementary fire, and has, at the same time, such a tendency to unite with other fire here below, that whatever

T 3                      combustible

combustible matter falls in its way, it easily converts to its own substance, and enlarges its sphere.

In like manner, all beings which partake of the same intellectual nature are even more strongly attracted towards their own species; for, the more excellent and the higher things are in the scale of existence, the greater tendency they have to mix with and be united to things of their own kind. Thus, even amongst irrational animals, we find swarms, herds, care of their offspring, and something analogous to the passion of love:† for they have souls of the animal kind; and therefore, being of a class superior to inanimate things, such as plants, stones, and trees, they are of course possessed of this principle of union to a greater degree.

But, if we proceed to creatures endued with reason, we find amongst them, political institutions; families, friendships, and

† The Stoics would not allow brutes to have passions or affections, but only instinct, or a blind impulse: “*Affectibus carent; habent autem similes illis quosdam impulsus.*”

SEN. de Ira.

publick assemblies; and (even amidst wars) treaties and truces.

But, in beings of a yet superior rank, as amongst the heavenly constellations, though placed at a distance from each other, there subsists a kind of union and concert; their superior excellence producing a sympathy between these bodies, the most remote from each other. Such, then, is the intention of nature; but observe the success! For, amongst us rational creatures alone, this mutual affection and tendency to unite are forgotten, and this herding disposition is hardly to be seen. Though, in reality, however we may affect to fly from society, nature still retains her influence over us. Of this you will be convinced, if you observe, that it is more easy to find a mass of terrene matter entirely unconnected with any other matter, than to find a man so absolutely unfociable, as to have no manner of communication with any part of mankind.

9. Man, the Deity himself, and the whole universe, may be said, in their proper season, to bear *fruit*: for, though the word  
in

in common speech is restrained to the productions of the vine, suppose, and other trees, that is of no consequence. Reason produces fruit, salutary to individuals, and to the community ; and all its productions resemble the stock from whence they are derived.†

10. Instruct mankind better, if you can; if not, remember, that patience and kindness were given you for this purpose; [that you might bear with their imperfections.] For the Gods themselves not only bear with patience the perverseness of men; but frequently co-operate with them in the preservation of their health, and in their pursuits of riches and glory. Such is the divine benevolence; which it is in your power to imitate, or say who prevents you?

11. Endure pain or toil, not as if you were miserable under it, or with a view to be pitied or admired for your philosophy; let your only aim be, to act or to forbear, as the laws of society require.

† The Scotch translators very properly quote St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians here, c. v. 22. "The *fruits* of the spirit are love, joy, peace," &c.

12. Well ! to-day I have escaped from every danger that surrounded me ; or rather, I have cast off every surrounding danger. For the dangers were not *without*, but only in my own improper opinions.

13. All the occurrences of the present time are familiar to experience, momentary in their duration, and coarse in their materials ; in short, all things precisely such as they were in the days of our forefathers, who are now in their graves.

14. The things themselves remain without doors, and neither know nor declare any thing concerning themselves. What is it, then, that discovers their true quality, and gives them either an harmless, or a formidable appearance ? Why, the opinion which our ruling principle pronounces concerning them.

15. The happiness or misery of a rational and social being does not consist in his own private sensations, but in the exertion of his active powers ; as virtue or vice does not consist in mere feelings or affections, but in action.

16. A



16. A stone, thrown up into the air, is merely passive; and neither the better for having ascended, nor the worse for falling to the earth again.\*

17. Look into the mind, and examine the conduct of these people; and you will see what sort of judges they are, of whom you stand in awe, and how well they judge in their own affairs.

18. All things subsist by change; and you yourself are in a continual state of alteration, and, in some respect, of corruption; and so indeed is the whole universe.

19. Leave the sins of others to their own consciences.

20. The cessation of any action, the suppression of any violent appetite, or the change of any opinion, which is (as it were) the death of them, is not really evil.

Proceed next to the different ages of man; his childhood, his youth, his manhood, and his old age. Now every *change*

\* This seems to be a mere hint in this place; having no connection with the preceding or the following section.

See B. viii. §. 20.

of these periods may be called their death: is there any thing formidable in this?

Pass on then to the life of your grandfather, of your mother, of your father; and, when you consider these, and many other vicissitudes, changes, and cessations; ask yourself, whether there is any thing formidable in all this? If there is not, neither is there in the entire termination, extinction, or change, which will take place in your own life.†

21. When any one offends you, recur immediately to the state of your own mind; to that of the universe; and to that of the person who has offended you: to your own, that you may dispose it to act justly; to that of the universe, that you may recollect of what a system you are a component part; to the offending party, that you may discover whether he has affronted you through ignorance or design; and consider, at the same time, that he is, in some sense, allied to you.

† This would be a sufficient consolation against the fear of death to a perfectly innocent being.

22. As

22. As you yourself are a component part of some social system, so every action of yours should tend to promote the happiness of society. Every action, therefore, which has not that end, either immediately or remotely at least, in view, disturbs the order, and breaks in upon that union, which ought to subsist in civil life, and may with as much propriety be termed seditious, as that of a man who joins a faction, and destroys the peace and harmony of the commonwealth.

23. The quarrels and the sports of children; miserable souls\* bearing about lifeless carcases: such are the trifling and transient scenes of human life, and give us a lively idea of the shades called up by necromancy. §

24. Whatever object comes under your contemplation, consider the efficient cause

\* B. iv. §. 41.

§ M. Casaubon gives up the allusion here as desperate. Gataker thinks it relates to some spectacles amongst the Greeks. The eleventh book of the *Odyssey* was called the *Néκυα*, as containing the evocation of the shades, for the satisfaction of Ulysses.

or

or form, abstractedly from the matter; then consider, how long a thing thus formed was probably intended to subsist.†

25. You have suffered a thousand inconveniences from not being contented with performing what your capacity was given you to perform; but enough of this folly!

26. When any one reproaches or treats you with malignant and abusive language, approach, inspect, and take the dimensions of his understanding, and observe what sort of people they are; you will soon perceive, that you ought not to give yourself any concern, what opinion they entertain concerning you.

Yet you should retain a friendly disposition towards them; for they are by nature friends to you. And the Gods set you an example; who admonish even these men by dreams and oracles, and graciously assist them in all their pursuits.

† It is not easy to guess the moral tendency of this section. Seneca says, “*Dicunt Stoici nostri duo esse in rerum naturâ, ex quibûs omnia fiunt, causam et materiam.*” &c.

Ep. 64.

27. All the occurrences in this world are much the same, from age to age, and come round in a circle. And either an intelligent Ruler of the universe exerts himself in each particular event, (in which case you ought cheerfully to acquiesce in his dispensations) or he has exerted himself at first, once for all; and the other events follow of course in a connected series; or else atoms, or indivisible particles, are the original cause of all things.

On the whole, if there is a God, every thing is right, and for the best; or, if all things happen by chance, yet *you* should take care not to act at random.

28. The earth will shortly cover us all; and the earth itself will soon undergo a change, and all things be transformed from one mode of existence to another, in an infinite succession. Now he that contemplates these perpetual changes and vicissitudes, thus rapidly rolling on, like one wave upon another, will have but a contemptible opinion of all mortal affairs. In short, the Universal Cause, like a winter's torrent, sweeps



sweeps every thing before it into the ocean of eternity !\*

29. What contemptible beings are these little sophists, who (puffed up with vanity) fancy they unite, in their own persons, the politician and the philosopher ! My good Sir, perform, to the best of your power, what nature requires of you ; and do not look round for applause, or to see whether any one observes you. Neither expect nor hope to find Plato's imaginary commonwealth ; but be contented, if the world goes on tolerably well, and esteem the smallest improvement no small point gained. For, who can change the opinions of these men ? But, without a change of their opinions, what is all their boasted wisdom, but a slavery under which they groan, while they pretend to freedom and independence ?

But, perhaps, you will here tell me of Alexander, and Philip, and Demetrius Phalereus.† It is their business, then, to inform

\* The division of these sections is dubious.

† The first the pupil, the second the friend of Aristotle, and the third a pretended philosopher himself.

us, whether they *really* understood what our common nature required of them, and submitted to her discipline. If they only *personated* the philosopher, no one shall compel me to imitate them. Philosophy is a simple and modest profession: let me not be seduced to affect a vain, ostentatious solemnity.

30. Survey, as from an eminence, the innumerable herds of mankind; their various religious rites; and the storms and calms, of every kind, incident to human life; and the different conditions of those who are just come into life, those who are united in society, and of those who are departing out of life.

Consider also, how people lived formerly before your time, how they will live after you, and in what manner many barbarous nations live at present; how many have never heard of your name; and how many that have, will soon forget it. How many also, who now perhaps applaud you, will very soon revile you. In short, that neither a posthumous fame, nor present glory, nor any thing of that kind, is worth your consideration.

31. Preserve

31. Preserve a perfect tranquillity of mind in those events which come to pass from any external cause; and have a regard to justice in those actions which proceed from the ruling principle within you; that is, let your whole aim and course of actions have the good of society for their object, which alone is acting suitably to your nature.

32. It is in your own power to cut off many of those superfluities which now disturb and molest you, as your own opinion alone gives them their importance; and, by this means, you will gain to yourself great freedom of mind, and live much more at your ease.

33. Take a comprehensive view of the whole universe, and survey, in imagination, the age you live in; then consider the sudden changes which all things undergo, and the short space of time between their production and their dissolution; lastly, reflect on the immense space of time before their production, and the boundless duration after their dissolution!

All things which you now behold will soon perish and disappear; and those who

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behold

behold them in a state of decay, will themselves also very soon perish and disappear: and he who dies in an extremely old age, will be in the same condition with him who was taken off by an early or untimely death.

34. Consider the intellects of these people; observe their serious pursuits, and what superficial qualities attract their love and esteem. Imagine that you see their *little souls* naked, and stripped of their disguise; and you will be astonished at their vanity and self-importance, when they flatter themselves that their censure or their applause can either injure or be of service to any one.

35. The loss of life is nothing more than a *change*. And, in this, the Universal Cause delights, as it contributes to the good of the whole. Thus things have been ordered from the beginning of time, and thus they will go on to all eternity.

“What! then,” you will say, “were all things ill-contrived at first? and will they always continue so? And, amongst such a number of Gods, has no Power been found capable of rectifying these things? And is  
the

the universe condemned to labour under never-ceasing evils?"\*

36. In what an evanescent state, if we consider them attentively, are the materials of all terrestrial bodies; water, dust, cartilages, excretions, and the like. Again, as to inanimate bodies; marble is only petrified earth; gold and silver, a kind of dross or sediment; our robes of state, only hair, tinged with the blood of the murex, or purple fish; even our *vital spirit* might be analysed in like manner, which is continually passing from one state to another.

37. Enough of this "miserable life;" enough of murmuring and ridiculous complaints.† What is it that disturbs you? What is there new or extraordinary in this? What is it that surprises you in this affair? Is it the matter or the form? Consider these two principles thoroughly, since there is no third in nature.‡

\* This question is answered by the first part of the section.

† Πιθηκισμός; apish tricks; an expressive word, "Pithekism."

‡ See §. 24 of this book.



For heaven's sake, then, learn at length to act with more simplicity, and more reasonably; and three years, thus virtuously spent, are as well as *three hundred*.

38. If any one has been guilty of a fault, leave him to himself, and let him answer for it; but perhaps he is not guilty.

39. Either all things proceed from one Intelligent Cause, (as their source) and for the good of all, as members of the same body; and then one inconsiderable part ought not to complain of what is for the benefit of the whole: or else all things come to pass by a fortuitous concourse of atoms; and consequently, every thing is jumbled together, and dispersed again at random. And why are you disturbed at this?† If you make no better use of your reason, you put it on a level with the brute creation; and may consider it either as dead, and utterly perished, or as subject to all the infirmities of the body.

40. Either the Gods have power to assist mankind, or they have not. If they have

† The text is here corrupted, and almost inexplicable.  
not,

not, why do you pray to them? If they have that power, why do you not rather pray, "that they would enable you neither to fear nor to desire any thing; nor to be more grieved for the want, than for the possession of it?" For, certainly, if they have the power to co-operate with the endeavours of men, they can do it in this respect.

But perhaps you will say, "The Gods have placed these things in my own power." Is it not better, then, to enjoy what are in your own power, with liberty and independence, than anxiously to pursue those things, with servility and mean submission, which are not in your own power?

But, who told you that the Gods do not assist us even in those things which are in our own power? Begin then to pray for these things, and you will see whether they have this power or not.

One man prays that he may possess such a woman; but you should pray to be freed from any such inclination. Another prays that he may be relieved from some disagreeable connection; but you should pray,

that you may not want to be relieved. Another prays, that he may not lose his child: do you, that you may not be *afraid* to lose him.‡

On the whole, conduct your devotions in this manner, and see the event.

41. Epicurus tells us, that when he was confined by any disease, his conversations with those who came to see him, never turned upon his own complaints, or any thing of that kind; “but I continued,” says he, “to discourse on any subject of philosophy, on which I had been previously meditating. And I was particularly attentive to this one point; namely, that my mind, which could not but be affected by the pains of the body, might yet remain in possession of her own privilege, and preserve her tranquillity. Nor did I put it in the power of the physicians, by any anxious concern for my health, to *plume themselves*\* on their skill, as if they had achieved some

‡ According to the stoic apathy.

\* Gataker's reading καλαφρότης αἰ, “insolescere,” is certainly the true one.

great

great exploit; but my life went on as cheerfully to the last, as the circumstances would admit."

In like manner do you conduct yourself, whether under any disease, or any other adverse event. For this is peculiar to every sect of philosophers,—never to depart from the principles of their philosophy, like the vulgar, who are ignorant of the nature of things; but to be always intent on the business in hand, and the best means of accomplishing it.

42. When you are provoked at the impudence of any one, immediately ask yourself this question, "Is it possible that there should be no impudent people in the world?" It certainly is not possible. Why then should you expect impossibilities? For this very man is one of those impudent fellows, who, you acknowledge, must necessarily be in the world.

Have the same question ready at hand, and apply it to the insidious, faithless, and every kind of vicious persons. For, when you recollect, that it is impossible but such wicked

wicked wretches should exist, this will make you more indulgent to the faults of individuals.

It will also be very useful to consider, what particular virtue nature has implanted in men against any particular vice. For, against ingratitude, she has given us lenity and patience; and, against other vices, other antidotes.

At all events, you have it in your power to inform better, one that has wandered from his road: for every one that acts wrong has missed his aim, and has gone out of his way. But, in reality, what injury have you suffered? For you will find, upon enquiry, that no one of those, against whom you are exasperated, has done any thing by which your *mind* is rendered less perfect. Now, in your mind alone, any thing really evil or detrimental can have its existence.

And what great harm is there, or what is there unusual, that an ignorant fellow should act as such? Consider, if you yourself are not rather to blame, for not having foreseen, that such a character would act  
in



in such a manner: for you had sufficient aids from reason and knowledge, to suppose, that it was probable, such a man would thus offend you; yet, forgetting this, you are surpris'd that such a man should be thus guilty.

But, more especially, turn to yourself, when you accuse any one of breach of promise, or of ingratitude: for the fault is evidently your own, when you trusted that a man of such a disposition would be true to his word; or that, when you bestowed a favour, you did not do it disinterestedly; and did not think that you received a sufficient reward from the generous action itself.

For, what more would you desire, when you have done a kind office to any one? Is it not sufficient, that you have acted, in this instance, agreeably to your nature? And do you expect a reward for it? As well might the eyes or the feet expect to be rewarded for performing their respective offices. For, as each of these was formed for a particular purpose, and when they have acted according to their destination, they

they have gained their end; so man, being born for benevolent actions, when he does a kind office to any one, or acts in any way for the good of the community, does what he was formed for, and has obtained his utmost perfection.

END OF THE NINTH BOOK.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK X.

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§. 1. **W**ILT thou ever, O my soul, become perfectly good, simple, and uniform; free from all disguise, and more pure and refined than the gross body that surrounds thee? Wilt thou ever taste the happiness of a truly benevolent and affectionate disposition? In a word, wilt thou ever be fully satisfied, without wants or wishes of any thing, either animate or inanimate, to complete thy enjoyment; without desiring any more leisure for ease and amusement; any change of place, or climate, or warmer air; or more friendly intercourse with mankind?†

† He certainly alludes to his situation amongst the Quadi and Pannonians, on the banks of the Danube; where his repose was disturbed by perpetual incursions and wars with the Barbarians.

Are

Are you then contented in your present situation, and determined to be pleased with your present circumstances, whatever they are; and convinced, that you possess every thing necessary, and that things are well with you? And, moreover, that every thing proceeds from the Gods; and that every thing is right, which they already have, or shall hereafter vouchsafe to bestow, as conducing to the welfare of the universe; that perfect, good, just, and fair system of animated nature;\* the parent of all things; which supports, comprehends, and embraces all things, which are in a state of dissolution, for the production of other beings like themselves?

Wilt thou then; at length, arrive at such a state of perfection, as to live and converse with the Gods and men, in such a manner, as neither to complain of them, nor give them reason to complain of you?

2. Observe what your nature requires of you in her vegetative capacity, as if you were subject to no higher a law; and comply with her instincts so far, as not to injure

\* See B. iv. §. 23.

your animal nature. In the next place, observe what your animal nature requires; and so far indulge her appetites, as not to be detrimental to your rational nature. Now, as a rational creature, you are evidently formed for the duties of society. If then, you attend to these rules, you need not be very solicitous about any thing further.

3. Whatever happens, it is of such a kind, that either you are formed by nature to bear it, or you are not so. If it is of such a kind as you are able to bear, do not be chagrined, but bear it as nature has enabled you to do. But suppose it is such as you are not naturally qualified to bear; yet do not fret, or lose your temper: for, if it destroy your life, and consequently your power of feeling it, there is an end of the matter.

Remember however, that you are formed by nature to bear whatever your own opinion of things *chuses* to make *tolerable*† or supportable, by representing it to your imagination, either as your duty, or as conducive to your advantage.

† Φορητὸν καὶ ἀνεκτὸν.

4. If



4. If any one is in an error, you ought kindly to instruct him, and point out his error. But, if this is not in your power, do not blame *him*, but *yourself*; nay, probably, you yourself are not to be blamed.

5. Whatever befalls you, was your lot, predestined from all eternity; and the series of causes so interwoven, that this event and your existence were necessarily connected.

6. Whether the world subsists by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or an Intelligent Nature presides over it, let this be laid down as a maxim, that I am a part of a whole, governed by its own nature, whatever that is; and, in the next place, that I have a social connection with those parts of this whole, which are of the same kind with myself. Keeping this then in mind, that I am a part of a whole, I shall never be displeased with whatever is allotted me by that whole. For, nothing can be injurious to any part, which is for the good of the whole. Now, the whole can have nothing within itself, which is not conducive to its advantage: it being common to all natures,  
it

it must be so to the Universal Nature, that it cannot be forced, by any external cause, to produce any thing detrimental to its own interest.

By recollecting, then, that I am a part of such a whole, I shall be satisfied with whatever proceeds from it.

And again, as I have a social connection with those parts which are of the same kind with myself, I will do nothing contrary to the good of society. Nay, I will rather make the good of my species my constant aim, and direct the whole force of my will to the good of the community, and abstain from every thing that is contrary to it.

With these resolutions, my life, I trust, must necessarily glide smoothly on: as you would esteem the life of a citizen in a prosperous state, who was going on in a course of actions advantageous to his countrymen, and cheerfully discharging every office to which he was appointed by the community.

7. All the parts of the universe, those, I mean, which are included within this mundane system, must necessarily be in a perishing

perishing state; that is, in a state of change. Now, if this perishing state be both evil, and yet unavoidable, is not the universe hardly dealt with, to be thus exposed, in her several parts, to continual alterations, and so peculiarly formed for dissolution and corruption?

Did nature, then, intentionally deal thus unkindly with her own members, and voluntarily subject them to unavoidable evil? or, did this come to pass without her knowledge or consent? Either of these suppositions is incredible.

But, if any one, leaving an Intelligent Nature out of the systems, should chuse only to say, “that things are so formed or *constituted*,” how ridiculous is it, at one and the same time, to say, “that the parts of the universe were originally formed with a tendency to change,” and yet to wonder, and be out of humour, as if these changes happened contrary to nature? Especially, as the dissolution of every thing is into those principles, of which it was formed: for, it is either a dispersion of those elements,  
of

of which it was composed, or it is a change of the solid parts into earth; or, of the spirituous parts into air. So that these also are taken into the plan of the universe; whether, after certain periods of time, to suffer a conflagration, or to be renewed by perpetual changes.

As for those earthy and those aërial parts which I mentioned, do not imagine that you possessed them from your birth; they were occasional accessions, not of long standing, taken in with the food which you eat, and the air which you breathe. It is this occasional afflux, then, and not what your mother bore, that undergoes this change.

But, suppose that original substance with which you were born to be indissolubly connected with your present stamina; that, in reality, makes nothing against my assertion.†

8. When you have once assumed the respectable names of a good and a modest man, and one on whose veracity we may

† M. Casaubon seems to have given the best account of this difficult passage.

X

depend;

pend; if you have acquired a distinguished character for *prudence*, resignation, and magnanimity, take care not to be guilty of any thing which may forfeit those glorious titles; or, if you should be so unfortunate, endeavour immediately to recover them.

But remember, that by *prudence*, is to be understood, a minute and careful investigation of every object that comes before you; by *resignation*, a voluntary compliance and acquiescence in whatever is allotted you by that common Nature which presides over the universe; and by *magnanimity*, an elevation of soul, superior to all the pleasurable or painful sensations of the flesh; a contempt of glory, of death, and every thing of that kind.

If, then, you can confine yourself to the consciousness of deserving these titles, and are indifferent whether other people bestow them on you or not, you will soon find yourself become quite another sort of man, and will enter, as it were, into another state of existence,

For,



For, to persist in such a way of life as you have hitherto led, harassed by contending passions, and polluted by sensual indulgencies, is the part of a man extremely insensible, and too fond of life: and who, in a moral sense, may be compared to those half-slain combatants with wild beasts in the amphitheatre, who, though covered with wounds and smeared with gore, yet supplicate to be reserved till the morrow, to be exposed again to the same teeth and claws of their savage antagonists.

Exert yourself therefore, and secure these few respectable titles; and, if possible, persevere in them, and fancy yourself conveyed into those fortunate islands, the elysium of the poets.

But, if you find yourself unequal to the attempt, and the ascent to virtue too arduous, resolutely withdraw yourself from society, and retire to some sequestered corner, where you will be less exposed to temptation; or even depart entirely out of the world, [rather than violate your duty] yet not in a passion, but with modesty, liberty,

and simplicity; having at least performed one action well in this life, by thus departing out of it.

Now it will greatly assist you in preserving the characters above-mentioned, if you recollect, that the Gods are better pleased that every rational creature should imitate them, than flatter them.

Remember likewise, that as a fig-tree is known by its fruit, and a bee or any other animal is distinguished by the functions peculiar to its species; so man is recognised as such by performing the duties of a man.

9. The pestilence‡ and the wars which now infest the empire, and our daily alarms on that account, your own indolence, and the servile flatteries of those about you, will obliterate the sacred maxims of wisdom, the result of your knowledge of nature, and which you have laid up for the conduct of your life.

‡ GATAKER is surprised that Xylander should read *Λοίμω*, *pestilence*, instead of *Μιμω*, a *comedian*; but, as the empire was long infested with the *plague*, as well as with *wars*, during the reign of M. Aurelius, I should think that a much more probable reading.

You

You ought, therefore, to act with such circumspection, as, at the same time, to discharge the duties of active life, and yet exercise your contemplative faculties, and with that confidence in your own abilities, which proceeds from a perfect knowledge of things; which you may preserve without ostentation, yet without a blind submission to the opinion of others. Thus you will enjoy a simplicity of mind, and appear with a dignity of character, and arrive at a true discernment of every object which occurs; what it is in its own nature, what importance it is of in the system of the universe, and how long it is calculated to last; to whose lot it may be destined, and in whose power it is to give, or to take it away.

10. A poor spider triumphs when she has ensnared a fly; a sportsman, when he has caught an hare; a fisherman, when he has got a gudgeon in his net; one man exults in taking a wild boar or a bear; and another, in having surprized a party of the poor *barbarous Sarmatians*.

Now, if you examine the motives on which they proceed, are not all these equally to be styled *robbers*?†

11. Make it the constant subject of your contemplation, in what manner things are perpetually changing from one mode of existence into another; and exercise yourself frequently in speculations of this kind. For nothing contributes more to greatness of mind, and to elevate and abstract it, as it were, from the gross appetites of the body, than to reflect how soon you are to leave this world, and mankind its inhabitants.

Such a one will conform, in every action, to the dictates of justice, and resign himself, in all events, to the *dispensations* of *Providence*.\*

And as for what other people may say of him, or practise against him, he does not

† M. Aurelius seems to allude to an horrid slaughter made of 3000 Sarmatians, who were surpris'd by a small party of Romans, without orders from the commanding officer; who, however, instead of rewarding them, punished the centurions very severely.

\* “*The nature of the universe* ;” though I have often used the modern expression, as more generally intelligible.

bestow

bestow a thought on that head; being attentive, I say, to these two objects alone; to act justly on every occasion that presents itself; and to acquiesce in whatever is allotted him.

In short, dismissing all anxiety, and every other concern, he proceeds in the direct path of virtue, which lies before him, conducted by Providence as his guide and protector.

12. Why should you entertain any apprehensions of the event of any affair, when it is in your power to consider what is proper to be done? And if you can discover that, proceed calmly, yet resolutely, to your point; if not, suspend your progress, and consult those whom you judge most capable of advising you. If you meet with still further obstructions, act according to the present appearances, but with caution, always adhering to what you think just; for that is the best object you can aim at; and to be disappointed in that aim, is the only real *misfortune*,‡ to which, in this respect, you

‡ “*Αποπρώσις*.” Casaubon thinks this a forensick term, and signifies to be “*non-suited*.”

are



are exposed. He that, in every instance, takes reason for his guide, is always unembarrassed and fit for action, cheerful,† yet sedate and composed.

13. Ask yourself, as soon as you awake in the morning, whether it concerns you that other people [whose virtues, perhaps, you *envy*,‡] are praised for acting justly and honourably? It certainly does not concern you, [nor need you trouble yourself about it.]

Have you forgot what sort of people those generally are, who take upon them, with airs of consequence, to bestow *applause* or *censure* on their neighbours? How debauched and luxurious they frequently are in their own conduct? What are their own

† “Res severa est verum gaudium; ne judica illum gaudere, qui ridet.”  
SEN. Ep. xxiii.

“True *joy* is of a severe nature; a man that laughs, though he is *merry*, is not always joyful.”

‡ COLLYER supposes the following sentence to have no connection with this; and, drolly enough, makes the Emperor say, “Now I think on’t,” by way of introduction.

actions,

actions, their capricious disgusts, or idle pursuits? What thefts and robberies (one may say) they are guilty of; not by their "*hands or feet*,"\* (as the vulgar expression is) but with their nobler part, by neglecting to adorn their minds (as they might have done) with the virtues of fidelity, modesty, and truth; and by not acting conformably to the law† of the Universal Nature, and the dictates of the good genius within them?

14. A well-informed mind, of moderate desires, will say to that great Being who gives us all things, and resumes what he has bestowed, "Give me, and take away from me, whatsoever seems good to thee."†

And this he will do, not with an haughty air of defiance, but with an humble resignation and a benevolent disposition.

15. But a small part of your life now remains; live, as on some sequestered mountain, abstracted from the world. For it is

\* Some proverbial expression.

† The good of the whole.

† Like the pious Job. This whole section expresses the humility of a Christian, rather than the pride of a Stoic.

of no consequence in what place *he* resides, who considers the whole universe as one city or commonwealth; and gives mankind an example of one who is a man indeed, and lives according to nature. But, if they will not endure a man whose life is a reproach to their own, let them dispatch him at once, and put him to death; for that is better than to live as *they* do:

16. Lose no more time in disputing about the *definition* of a *good man*, but endeavour yourself to be one.

17. Represent to your imagination the whole extent of time, and the whole mass of the material world; and you will perceive, that all individual bodies are but as the grain of a fig, as to its substance, and as the turning of an *auger*, in respect to its duration.\*

You may consider every thing before your eyes as now in a state of dissolution and change; or, one may say, in a state of putrefaction and dissipation, and that they were only born to die.

\* A proverbial expression,

Consider men in their different situations, and as differently employed; when eating, or sleeping, or performing the other necessary functions of life.

Observe them at one time acting as magistrates, or in some exalted station, and rebuking their inferiors with pride, anger, and insolence; when a little before, perhaps, they had been fervilely cringing to masters more base than themselves. Finally, consider to what a wretched state they may shortly be again reduced!

18. That is most for the advantage of every one, which Providence appoints to every one, and precisely at the time when it is appointed.

19. "The earth *loves*† a refreshing shower, and the lofty æther *loves* the earth," as the poet says.

The universe, likewise, *loves* to execute what is destined to come to pass: I there-

† Euripides speaks of the rain descending into the bosom of the earth, and fertilizing it, as an *amorous* intercourse, which produces the fruits and flowers which adorn it.

fore say to the universe, “I love what thou lovest:” such is the vulgar phrase; “It *loves* to have it so;”\* that is, it usually happens thus.

20. Either you intend to live as you now do, and are reconciled to it by habit; or you intend to change for a more publick station; or perhaps you have sufficiently discharged the duties of this life, and wish to leave it. Besides these, there is no other choice; therefore make yourself easy, and be not discouraged.†

21. You may depend on this as an evident truth, that with respect to happiness, the town and country are much alike; and that you may live as retired, and in every respect the same here, as on the side of a mountain, or on the sea-coast, or wherever you please. For that proverbial saying of

• The Stoics were fond of these grammatical niceties; but it cannot be supposed that M. Aurelius ever intended the hints of this kind should be made publick.

† There are several passages which seem to confirm the opinion, that the Emperor wished to resign the sovereign power, and retire to a private station.

Plato



Plato is an obvious truth, "*That a wise man may be as secure from interruption or temptation within the walls of a city, as in a hut on the top of a mountain.*"

22. What is the present state of my mind, and the condition of my ruling faculty, and to what purposes do I now employ it? Is it incapable of intellectual exertions? Is it become selfish, and loosened from the interests of society? Is it so far attached and incorporated with my carnal part, as to be subject to its motions, and sensual appetites, and affections?

23. He that runs away from his master, is ignominiously styled a *fugitive*. Now the law\* is our master; and he who transgresses the law is a fugitive.

Moreover, he who is a slave to any passion, to grief, anger, or fear; he who is dissatisfied with what is past, or now doing, or to be done hereafter, by the command of Him who rules the universe, and who is the *Law* that distributes to every one what is

\* He means the *law* of nature, or the universe.

allotted him by Fate; he, I say, who is afraid, or grieved, or angry, at these dispensations, is a *fugitive* slave.

24. How wonderful and mysterious are the operations of nature, even in her most ordinary productions! In forming the infant, for example, in its embryo state, and bringing it to its utmost perfection, what a surprising effect from such a cause!†

Again, on its birth, the mother transmits its aliment through [its proper channel] which another cause then receives, and, by degrees, produces sensation, appetite, life, and strength; and, in short, the many other astonishing faculties, requisite to complete the animal.

These things are involved in great obscurity; but we may contemplate, and even *behold* them, though not with our eyes, yet not less manifestly; as we survey with our mental faculties that amazing power,‡ by

† The learned reader will see the reason why the translator has not here given him a very close translation: some of the stoical ideas approached too near to those of the Cynics.

‡ Now called “Gravitation.”

which

which bodies descend or ascend, without any cause visible to our organs of sight.

25. You should frequently reflect, that the world was always the same, and that things went on formerly precisely as they now do, and that they will do the same in all future times.

Recollect, therefore, the various scenes and transactions, which either your own experience, or the page of history, can supply, and you will find them surprisingly uniform.

Take a view of the whole court of Hadrian, of Antonine, of Philip of Macedon, or Cræsus; for you will find them exactly resemble your own, though the performers in the drama were different.

26. One may compare (in imagination) a man bewailing any event, and struggling against it, to the victim‡ in a sacrifice, bellowing and struggling under the axe.

Nor much wiser is he, who, though silent and alone on his couch, laments his lot, though inevitably decreed by fate!

‡ The original is χοιρίδew; but the idea of a pig would be ludicrous in our language.

Consider

Consider also, that to rational creatures alone it is given to follow voluntarily, where all others must from mere necessity submit.

27. Examine separately every thing in which you are engaged, [and in which, perhaps, you take some slight pleasure] and ask yourself seriously, whether death be so very terrible, merely for depriving you of such trifling gratifications?

28. When you are offended with any one for some misbehaviour, turn your thoughts on your own conduct, and consider, whether you yourself are not sometimes guilty of some similar misconduct? Whether, for instance, you do not esteem money, pleasure, fame, and the like, as real blessings? For reflections of this kind will soon make you forget your disgust. Especially, if you consider, also, that the man was under a kind of moral necessity, from some passion, to act thus; for no one would voluntarily have done it.

If you can, however, you should rescue him from this violence.

29. When you reflect on the character of Satyrion, the old Socratic philosopher, compare

compare him, in idea, with our contemporaries, Eutyches or Hymen.\* If Euphrades occurs to your memory, contrast him with Entychion or with Sylvanus; Alciphron with Tropæophorus; Xenophon with Crito or Severus; in short, when you contemplate your own character, bring some of the Cæsars, your predecessors,† before your eyes; and when you have thus formed a comparison between the great characters of ancient and modern times, it will occur to you to enquire, where are now these men who figured thus in the world? No where; or at least, no where that we know of. And thus all human affairs will appear to you in their true light, as mere smoke and *nullities*; especially, if you reflect that what has once undergone a change, will never exist again (in the same individual form) to all eternity. But how small a point do you possess of that infinite space of time! Why

\* Some of these names are now dubious.

† The reader will recollect that Antoninus addresses this to himself.

Y

are



are you not satisfied, then, to employ this small space, as becomes you? What a fine subject and opportunity of moral improvement are you neglecting! For what are all these changes and vicissitudes of human life, but the exercises of reason, to a man who has, accurately and with a true knowledge of nature, contemplated and looked through them? Persevere, therefore, in your speculations, till you have made these things familiar to yourself: as an healthy stomach assimilates every thing to its use, or as a clear fire converts whatever you cast into it, into flame and splendour.

30. Put it not in the power of any man to say, with truth, that you are not an honest and good man, but, by your conduct, give the lye to any one that entertains a suspicion of that kind concerning you. Now this is entirely in your own power; for who can prevent you from acting a good and honest part on all occasions? At least, you must determine to live no longer than you  
can

can act thus; neither does reason require that you should do so.†

31. Consider, on every occasion, what is most proper to be done or said; for, whatever that is, it is in your own power to do or to say; and do not pretend that it is in the power of any one to hinder you.

You will never cease repining at the restraint which philosophy lays you under, till you come to such a pass, as to act agreeably to the nature of man, on every occurrence which falls in your way, with as much pleasure, or rather, with the same luxury, with which a voluptuous man enjoys the object of his pleasures. And, indeed, you ought to esteem every thing a pleasure, which it is in your power to perform suitably to your own nature. But this it is always in your power to perform.

Now inanimate beings, such as a cylinder, for instance, has it not always in its

† It appears from many of these "Reflections," that M. Aurelius did not approve of suicide, but to prevent the violation of our duty.

power to follow its natural motion; nor water, nor fire, nor any other things which are under an irrational impulse; for there are many causes which may interrupt and restrain them. But an intelligent and rational being can pursue its natural course, and act as it wills, in spite of all obstruction.

Keep before your eyes, therefore, this facility with which reason proceeds through every obstacle, as the fire ascends, the water descends, and the cylinder moves on an inclined plane, and trouble yourself no further. For all other impediments are either those of the lifeless carcass, or such as (unless from our own opinion of them, or the consent of our will) no ways injure or debase us; otherwise, he who suffers by them would immediately become a bad man.

In all other works of nature or of art, indeed, whatever mischief happens to them, the fabric itself becomes the worse for it; but, in this case, the man becomes the better, if one may say so, and more worthy of praise, by making a right use of whatever befalls him.

On

On the whole, remember, that nothing can really injure a man who is a member of a community, which does not injure that community. Now nothing can injure the community, which does not violate the law, [by which it is governed.] But these misfortunes, as we call them, do not violate or injure the laws of the universe, nor, of consequence, the community to which we allude, nor its members.

32. To one that is well instructed in the maxims of philosophy, the shortest and most obvious hint may suffice to set him free from grief or fear. Such is that of the poet :

“ Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,  
“ Now green in youth, now with’ring on the  
“ ground :

“ Another race the following spring supplies,  
“ They fall successive, and successive rise.”

POPE.

Your children are but *leaves*; and those gentlemen who declaim so plausibly, and either celebrate or censure others in their publick harangues, or slander or ridicule

Y 3

them

them in private, are no more than the *leaves* of the spring; such also are those who are to be witnesses of your posthumous fame. For all these come forth in the spring, as it were; then the wind disperses them, and the grove produces a succession of leaves in their room; but a short period of existence is common to them all.

Yet you fly from or pursue them as if they were immortal. A short time also will close your eyes for ever! and he who now carries you to your long home, will soon be lamented by some surviving friend.

33. A sound eye ought to view without pain all visible objects, and not to say, “that it can look on nothing but what is *green*;” for that is like one who has weak eyes. The sound ear also, and the sense of smelling, ought to be ready to listen to any sounds, and to receive any smells, which are the objects of those senses. And an healthy stomach should be equally prepared for all kinds of food, as a mill is to grind every sort of grain.

In



In like manner, a sound mind ought to be prepared for every event that comes to pass. But he who is always importunately wishing, “that *Heaven* would preserve his *children*, or solicitous “that every one should applaud his actions,” is like the eye that can look on nothing but green, or the teeth that can eat nothing but what is soft and tender.

34. There is no man so fortunate in his intercourse with the world, but that, when he dies, some of his neighbours will congratulate themselves on the event. Though he was ever so good and wise, will not there be some one at last ready to say to himself, “Well, I shall now be relieved from this troublesome pedagogue! He was not very severe in his behaviour towards any of us; but I could perceive that he secretly condemned us.” This will be said even of a good man.

But, in my case, how many other things are there, for which many of my friends would not be sorry to be freed from my presence!

If

If you reflect on this at your death, you will depart with the less reluctance; when you consider that you are leaving a world, where the very partners of your fortune, for whom you have undergone so many toils, whom you have been so anxious to serve, the constant subjects of your good wishes, these very people wish to have you gone; hoping, perhaps, to be more easy and happy without you.\*

Why then should any one wish for a longer abode in such a world as this? Yet do not, on that account, depart with less good-will towards them; but still preserve your own consistent character, and be friendly, benevolent, and at peace with all mankind.

On the other hand, do not depart as if dragged out of life by force; but as when a man dies an easy death, the soul quits the body almost insensibly, such ought your departure from your friends to be. For na-

\* He seems to allude to some profligate retainers to his son Commodus, who hoped to get into power, when he came to the throne; which was really the case.

ture has indeed connected and united you with them, but now dissolves the union. I separate myself from them, therefore, as from relations; yet not by force, but voluntarily: for this separation is one of those things which are according to nature.

35. In the actions of other people, which come under your observation, accustom yourself, as far as it is practicable, to discover what they propose by them: yet your first attention ought to be directed to your own conduct.

36. Remember that it is some latent passion or opinion, that actuates and impels you different ways, as the wires do a puppet. This has the force of eloquence, this gives a colour to your life, this, in short, if I may so speak, is really the man.

Never confound in your ideas with this ruling part, that vessel of clay which surrounds it; nor its material instruments or members which adhere to it: for they are no more than the tools of a mechanick, with this only difference, that these members are united to the body. Though they are of  
no

no more use, without the cause that actuates them or checks their motion, than the shuttle to the weaver, the pen to the writer, or the whip to the charioteer.

END OF THE TENTH BOOK.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK XI.

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§. 1. **T**HE privileges of the rational soul are these: it contemplates itself, it regulates itself, and renders itself such as it wishes to be. The fruits\* which it produces, itself enjoys: whereas others enjoy the product of trees, or of domestick animals, and the like.

The rational soul likewise obtains its end, at whatever period the termination of life approaches: contrary to what happens in a dance, (suppose) or a dramatic performance on the stage, where, if any thing interrupts it, the whole action is rendered incomplete. But the soul, in whatever part of the drama it is surpris'd by death, has performed what is past to perfection, and without any defect,

\* See B. ix. §. 9.

and



and can truly say, "I have obtained all that is really my own."

Moreover, it ranges over this universal system, and the void spaces which surround it, and extends its views into the boundless gulph of duration, and comprehends and surveys in imagination the periodical renovation of all things; and discovers, that our successors will see nothing new, as our predecessors saw nothing more than what we have seen.

But he who has lived forty years, if he is a man of any observation, (such is the uniformity of events) may be said to have seen every thing past or to come.

It is likewise the property of the rational soul to love those who stand in any near relation to it, to have a regard to truth and modesty, and to reverence her own authority beyond all things; which is also the property of the law, or the rule of justice. So that right reason and the rule of justice really coincide, and are the same thing.

2. If you find yourself too much captivated with an agreeable song, a dance, or  
the

the diversions of the amphitheatre, you will learn to be indifferent toward them, by dividing the melodious voice into its distinct notes, and asking yourself, in regard to every one separately, "Is it this or that single note that thus transports or subdues me?" For you will then be ashamed of your folly.†

If you act in the like manner with respect to each particular movement or attitude in the dance, and the same with respect to the exercises in the amphitheatre, and, in short, to every thing else except virtue and its duties, by running over their several distinct parts, you will bring yourself not to estimate things beyond their real importance.

Apply this method of proceeding to all the other parts and to the whole of life.

3. How happy is that soul, which is always prepared, if necessary, to depart immediately from the body; and either to be

† This principle, pursued too far, would annihilate almost every species of beauty and source of pleasure.

" 'Tis not a lip or eye we *beauty* call,

" But the *joint force* and full result of all." POPE.

extinguished

extinguished or dispersed in air, or to continue longer in existence.

But then this readiness to depart should proceed from its proper judgment of things, (and not from mere *obstinacy*, like that of the Christians ;\*) so that it may meet death with a rational fortitude and composure, without a theatrical ostentation; that your example may inspire others with the same resolution.

4. Have I done any thing for the benefit of society? And is not the action itself my reward? Let this opinion of the matter always occur to your mind, and never cease to act in the same manner.

5. Pray what art do you profess? why, the art of living a good life. And how is this to be accomplished, but by attention to the maxims which teach us the nature of the

\* Pliny makes this undesigned encomium on the *fortitude* of the Christians, and tells the Emperor Trajan, that after putting them to the torture, he could discover no *crime* they were guilty of but “ inflexible *obstinacy*” in not sacrificing to their deities.

B. x. Ep. 97. See Warb. Div. Leg. ii. 6.

universe

universe and the condition of man, and the relation which the one bears to the other.

6. Tragedies were at first introduced to remind us of the calamities necessarily attendant on human nature, and to teach us that such disastrous events as entertain us on the stage, we should bear with patience on the more enlarged stage of human life. For we see that such incidents must unavoidably befall us; and that even those illustrious persons who are the subjects of these tragical representations, are forced to submit to them.\*

These dramatic writers indeed have many useful moral sentences in their works; such as the following, for instance:

“Me and my offspring if the Gods neglect;

“Yet what they do is right.”——

And again,

“In vain we fret at life’s events, &c.”

\* The exclamation of OEdipus in Sophocles,—“*Ἰω! καὶ θήρων!*” is quoted in the original; but would only puzzle the English reader. He wished he had died in his infancy, when he was exposed on that mountain,

And

And again,

“Death mows down mortals like a field of corn.”

And others of the same kind.†

To Tragedy *succeeded*\* the *ancient* Comedy; which, with an instructive liberty of speech, and by a direct attack, subdued the pride of the great. For which purpose, Diogenes also adopted something of the same kind.

Consider next, with what design the *middle* and then the *new* comedy was introduced; which, after a short time, degenerated from its moral purpose into a mere ambitious display of skilful imitation† (for every one knows that they also contain some useful instructions). But finally, consider to what

† See Book vii. §. 34.

\* As dramatick performances took their rise from the licentiousness of the vintage, when a *goat* was sacrificed to Bacchus. *Tragody* was a name common to the *comick* as well as to the *tragick* pieces; yet as the latter were first brought to some regularity by Thespis, the Old Comedy is said to succeed it.

† He alludes to the Mimi; a sort of farce or pantomime. “*Imitantes turpia Mimos.*” Ov. Trist. b. ii.  
mark



mark this whole system of poetry and dramatic performances was originally directed.\*

7. How evidently does it appear that no other situation in life is better adapted for the study and practice of philosophy, than that in which you are already placed.

8. A branch cut off from another branch to which it adhered, cannot but be separated from the whole tree; thus a man, disunited from any man with whom he was connected, has fallen off from the whole community.

Moreover, a branch must be cut off by some other person, but a man separates himself from his neighbour through hatred or aversion, and is not aware that at the same time he cuts himself off from the whole political body. Nevertheless, this is the peculiar indulgence of Jupiter, who instituted this political community,\* that we may again be reunited to those with whom we were before connected, and recover our situation, so as to complete the whole.

† “ Simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitæ.”

HOR. de Arte.

\* B. vii. §. 34.

If these separations indeed should frequently happen, they make the reunion and reinstating us more difficult, and the process more slow.

On the whole, a branch which has grown up, and always flourished with the parent tree, is very unlike one which has been cut off and again ingrafted: for the latter, as the nurserymen observe, may grow and even bear fruit with the tree, but never kindly unite with it in figure and beauty.\*

9. Those who would interrupt your progress in virtue and when you are acting according to right reason, as they cannot force you to quit a right course of action, so let them not deprive you of your benevolent affection towards them. Resolutely persevere in these two points, not only in a consistent judgment and practice, but in a mild behaviour towards those who attempt to obstruct or any ways give you trouble. For it is equally an instance of weakness, either to be provoked by such people, or to desist

† The text is here again uncertain.

from your purpose, and be deterred from your duty. Both are equally deserters from their station, he who leaves his post through fear, and he who is alienated from one who is by nature allied and who ought to be dear to him.

10. Nature can never be inferior to art, for the arts are only imitations of nature: If this be granted, it follows, that the Universal Nature, which is of all others the most perfect and comprehensive, cannot be exceeded by the most skilful work of art. Now in all arts the inferior are made subservient to the more excellent: and thus it is with the Universal Nature or First Cause. And this is the original of justice [which estimates things according to their real worth] and hence are derived the other virtues. For justice cannot be maintained, if we are too anxious about indifferent things, and suffer ourselves to be thus easily imposed upon, and are rash and capricious in our attachments.

11. If those things, the eager pursuit of, or aversion to, which gives you so much trouble,

trouble; do not intrude themselves upon you, but on the contrary, you in some measure throw yourself in their way; let your opinion concerning them stand neuter, and they will remain harmless; and you will neither anxiously pursue nor avoid them.

12. The soul may be compared to a regular polished sphere, when it neither extends itself beyond its surface [after any thing external] nor shrinks into itself through fear, nor is depressed by grief, but reflects a light which discovers the truth in other objects and that within itself.

13. Does any one treat me contemptuously? \* Let him look to that; but I will take care not to do or say any thing worthy of contempt.

Does any one hate me? that is his concern. But I will persevere in my kindness and good-will to all men, and even to this very man, and be ready to shew him his error; not by way of insult, or to make an ostenta-

\* B. v. §. 25. This admirable sentiment is repeated, but expanded, and the expression varied,

tatious display of my patience, but with sincerity and candour: as Phocion did to the Athenians, [who had unjustly condemned him] if perhaps he did not intend it as a sarcasm.\*

For indeed your very inmost soul should be so disposed as to bear the inspection of the Gods themselves, that they may see you are neither angry nor dissatisfied with any thing: for what evil can befall you, if you act conformably to your nature. Will you not submit to what is now seasonable to the nature of the universe, when you were formed for this very purpose, to contribute, in some measure, to what is conducive to the good of the whole?

14. People often flatter those whom they despise, and affect to submit to those whom they are endeavouring to surpass.

15. How fulsome and how suspicious is the sincerity of those people who are so full of their professions! "Sir, I am determined

\* "That the poisoned cup which they gave him, was only such as they gave their friends." See PLUTARCH.



to act openly and ingenuously with you.”— Well, Sir, what necessity is there for declaring this? It will appear by your actions. This declaration should be seen immediately, “written in your forehead,” as we say. The state of your mind should sparkle in your eyes, as the person beloved discovers his sentiments in the eyes of the lover. A truly good and sincere man should be so palpably such, that no one could be a moment in his company or approach him, without being *sensibly* and *necessarily* convinced of it.\*

In short, the affectation of simplicity is often a concealed dagger. Nothing is more base than the insidious friendship of the wolves [in the fable ;] avoid this above all things. True goodness, and simplicity, and benevolence, appear in the countenance and cannot be concealed.

16. The power of living most happily is situated in your mind ; if you regard as in-

\* The expression in the original is rather coarse ; which the translators have rather heightened than softened as they might have done,

different

different things that are indifferent and neither really good nor evil. You will arrive at this indifference by considering every object in its several parts as well as in the whole; remembering that none of them can obtrude any opinions concerning them on our minds, or even approach us, but remain harmless. It is we ourselves who form these judgments, and *paint* them, as it were, on our imaginations; yet it is in our power not to do this; and if any wrong idea of them lurks within us, immediately to discharge it.

Besides, it is but a short time that this attention will be necessary, as this life will soon be at an end.

And what is there difficult in thus regulating our opinions? If they are according to nature, rejoice in them; they will be pleasant to you: If they are contrary to nature, find out what is more suitable to your own particular nature, pursue it with alacrity, though not attended with honour or the applause of the vulgar: for every one is at liberty to pursue his own happiness.

17. Consider

17. Consider in every object, whence it proceeds, of what it consists, what change it will undergo, and what it will be in its next state; and lastly, reflect that these natural changes are attended with no evil effects.

18. In regard to those who have offended me, let me consider, first, in what relation I stand with respect to them, and that we were born for the mutual benefit of each other; and, in my political character,\* that I was placed over them for their protection, as the ram over the flock, and the bull over the herd. If we go higher in our researches, either chance or some Intelligent Nature governs the universe. If the latter, then the inferior beings were formed for the more excellent, and these for each other.

Secondly, Consider what sort of people these are that are your enemies, their licentious and luxurious character, and their other vices. But especially reflect, how strongly they are influenced by their own maxims, and with what pride and self-satisfaction they act thus.

\* As their Emperor.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, If they had just cause for what they have done, you ought not to resent it; if they had not, they certainly acted unwillingly and through ignorance: for as every soul is unwilling to be deprived of truth, so no one would be thought guilty of treating others with impropriety: as men are grieved to be accounted unjust, ungrateful, covetous, or injurious to their neighbours.

In the fourth place, reflect that you yourself are guilty of many faults, and are in many respects like those that offend you. And though you abstain from some vicious acts, you have an habitual *inclination* to commit them, but are restrained by fear, a regard to character, or some other less virtuous motive, from further indulgence in them.

Fifthly, That you cannot be certain whether they have been guilty of any fault or not. For many things are done on particular occasions by way of *accommodation*\* to vulgar prejudice.

\* Or to answer some good end; of which GATAKER gives various instances, as of Solomon's ordering the child to be divided to discover the mother; and the Emperor

prejudice. One must be acquainted with many circumstances before we can form a proper judgment of other people's actions.

Sixthly, When you are excessively provoked and suffer some real injury, reflect that human life is but of a moment's duration, and that in a short time we shall all be laid in our tombs together.

In the seventh place, consider that they are not the actions of other people that disturb us, (for the mischief is confined to their own breasts) but it is our own opinion concerning them. Dismiss that opinion then, and the idea of your having suffered any great injury, and your anger is vanished.

But "how shall I dismiss this opinion?" Why, by reflecting, that what you suffer has nothing dishonourable in it. For unless you can persuade yourself that nothing is evil, but what is base and dishonourable, you will

peror Claudius commanding a woman, who disowned her son, to marry him.

SUETON. l. 5. c. 15.

Dr. CHAPMAN, in answer to Tindal, quotes this passage in defence of the Fathers.

necessarily



necessarily be exposed to many crimes, and may even become a robber and every thing that is bad.\*

Eighthly, Consider, how much more we suffer from our anger and grief on those occasions, than from the things themselves which excite our anger or our grief.

In the ninth place, Consider, that benevolence is invincible, if it be genuine, without affectation or hypocrisy. For what can the most brutishly injurious person do to you, if you persevere in your kindness to him; and when an opportunity offers, tenderly admonish him, and at the very time when he is going to do you an injury, thus calmly instruct him :† “ Forbear, my son, we were formed by nature for a quite different purpose; you cannot injure me, but you hurt yourself, my son!” Thus endeavour to shew him tenderly and in general that things are so;

\* That is, if we esteem pain, poverty, or even death itself, an evil, we may be tempted to any crime to avoid them.

† The good Emperor, I am afraid, had too good an opinion of human nature in general.

that

that bees or any other animals that herd together never injure each other.

But this must be done, not in a contemptuous or reproachful manner, but with an affectionate air, and without any appearance of being hurt by the injury; nor as displaying your eloquence to attract the admiration of the by-standers, but as addressed to him only, tho', perhaps, others may be present.

These *nine* topicks of patience treasure up in your memory, as if you had received them as a present from the nine Muses; and begin at length to be a man for the rest of your life.

But you ought equally to guard against flattering them as well as against resenting their conduct: for each of them is contrary to the good of society, and detrimental to the individual. As an obvious restraint to anger, observe, that it is unbecoming a man; and that as a mild and gentle disposition is more suitable to human nature, it is also more manly. For strength of mind and true fortitude are attendants on a calm disposition, and by no means on passionate and peevish tempers

tempers. The nearer this mild disposition approaches to apathy or a freedom from passion, the nearer it is to force and power. As grief betrays impotence of mind, anger does the same; for each has received a wound, and sinks under it.

If you would receive a tenth gift from the *president*\* of the Muses; take it; it is this; that to expect bad men should not act ill, is the part of a madman: for it is expecting what is impossible. And to see them, with complacency, injuring *others*, and to expect that they should spare *you*, is an unreasonable and tyrannical principle.†

19. There are four propensities of the mind‡ against which you ought constantly

\* Either Hercules or Apollo. Each had the title of Musagetes.

† To expect to be exempted from the common lot of mankind, is affecting a superiority which we have no right to.

‡ 1. The acting at random, and without any certain end in view. 2. Selfishness, and acting contrary to the good of society. 3. Dissimulation. 4. Sensuality and intemperance. This obscure section must be explained by §. 16. b. ii.

to guard it; and whenever you discover them, endeavour to check and suppress them in this manner: “This idea which presents itself, is unseasonable, and must not be complied with.” Secondly, “This is selfish and prejudicial to society.” Thirdly, “In this case, you could not speak as you think, which is the greatest of all absurdities.” Lastly, “To yield to these gross and brutish pleasures, is to subject the more divine and noble part of you to the more base and mortal part, your body and its sensual appetites.”

20. The aërial and fiery particles of your composition, though naturally formed to ascend, yet, in obedience to the laws of the universe, remain confined to the body in which they are mixed.

In like manner, the earthy and watery particles, though they naturally descend, yet are raised and continue suspended; though not in the station which is natural to them. Thus the elements, wherever they are forcibly placed, obey the whole, and keep their post, till the signal be given for their dissolution.

Is it not monstrous, then, that the intellectual part alone should prove disobedient, and be dissatisfied with its situation; though no violence be offered it, nor any thing enjoined it, but what is agreeable to its nature.

Yet the mind will not submit to this dispensation, but runs counter to it: for all its tendency towards injustice and sensuality, its yielding to the passions of grief and fear, is nothing more than a departure from its nature. And whenever the mind complains of the common events of life, it then may be said to desert its station: for it is formed for resignation and piety no less than for justice. For these are a species of social duties towards the Gods, rather more venerable even than justice towards men.

21. He who has not one uniform end in view in all his actions, can never be consistent and uniform through life. But what I have said is not sufficient, unless you add what that end or design should be.

Now as all men are not agreed in their opinion concerning those things which are esteemed good by the vulgar, and only concerning



cerning those which tend to the benefit of society; so the end proposed by every one should be of the social kind, and for the benefit of the body politic. For he alone, who directs all his private pursuits to that end, can render all his actions uniform, and by that means preserve an uniform and consistent character.

22. Remember the fable of the country-mouse and the city-mouse, and the alarms and terrors of the latter.

23. Socrates used to call many received opinions of the multitude, † bugbears to fright children.

24. The Spartans, at their publick spectacles, appointed seats for strangers in the shade; but took their own places as chance directed.

25. Socrates excused himself for not accepting an invitation from Perdiccas, “Left, says he, I should suffer the greatest possible misfortune, † by receiving a favour, for which I cannot make any return.”

† It is not a modern witticism then.

† In being guilty of ingratitude.

26. There

26. There is a precept in the writings of Epicurus, "That we should constantly keep in mind the example of some ancient, who was eminent for his virtue."

27. The Pythagoreans advise us to look up to the heavens every morning, to remind us of those coelestial beings which regularly pursue the same course, and perform the work allotted them; and to observe their order, their purity, and their naked splendour: for the stars have no veil.

28. With what unconcern did Socrates appear, dressed in a skin, when Xantippe had gone out in his clothes! And with what humour he entertained his friends, who were out of countenance and retiring, on seeing that great man so ludicrously equipped!†

29. Even in writing and reading, you will never teach others till you have been taught yourself. Much more should this be attended to in the more important affairs of life.

† Might he not more decently have retired himself?

A a

30. "You

30. "You are a slave, and have no right  
"to speak:

"But I laugh'd in my own mind."

HOM. Odyss.

"They will treat their parents with harsh  
"words."

HESIOD.†

31. It is madness to expect figs in the winter; and no less so to endeavour to preserve your child, when doomed to die.

32. Epictetus, seeing a father fondly caressing his child, bade him say to himself, "That to-morrow, perhaps, he will be snatched from me by death." But those, you will say, are words of ill omen. Nothing can be of ill omen, which is only expressive of the common operations of nature; otherwise it would be ominous to say, that "Corn will be cut down in the harvest."

33. The unripe grape, the ripe cluster, and the dried grape, these are all changes of the same thing; not into *nothing*, but into what does not yet exist in that form.

† It is not easy to guess for what purpose these scraps were quoted.

34. "No

34. "No one can rob you of your free-will," says Epictetus.

35. He also bids us find out the true art of yielding our assent to any thing.†

And in regard to our pursuits, that we should carefully watch and keep them within bounds; and always with a reserve† [for disappointment;] that they should have a respect to the rights of society, and be proportioned to the importance of the object. As to any violent appetites or desires, we should restrain them altogether, nor indulge our aversion to any thing that is not in our own power.

36. "It is no small prize which philosophers contend for, (says he) but whether they shall be deemed madmen or not."\*

37. Which of the two would you have, (said Socrates) the soul of a rational or of an

† This art is explained by the Emperor himself, Book viii. §. 7. which is no more than not assenting to any thing false or uncertain.

† See B. iv. §. 5.

\* It is a known maxim of the Portico, "Omnes stultos insanire," that all fools are mad men,

A a 2

irrational

irrational creature? Of a rational, without all doubt. But of what kind of rational creatures, of the virtuous or of the vicious? Of the virtuous, surely. Why do you not endeavour then to procure this privilege? Because we are already in possession of it. Why then do you thus worry and torment each other?

END OF THE ELEVENTH BOOK.



# MEDITATIONS.

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## BOOK XII.

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§. 1. **A**LL those advantages [that state of perfection and happiness] at which by a long circuit\* of time and trouble you wish to arrive, if you are not your own enemy, you may now obtain. This you will accomplish, if, thinking no more of the time past, and leaving the future to Providence, you employ the present time according to the dictates of piety and justice; of piety, by submitting cheerfully to what is allotted you; for that will conduce to your good in the end; and you were destined to this allotment:† of justice, that with freedom and without prevarication, you may speak the truth, and act on all occasions according to the law of reason, and according to the importance of the object.

\* Περιόδος—but the English word has a different sense.

† See B. iii. §. 4.

And

And be not prevented from doing your duty by the malicious or absurd opinions or the censure of other people, nor even by any punishment which may be inflicted on that mass of flesh which surrounds you. In what that suffers, you are not really concerned.\*

If then, as you are now on the verge of life, you lay aside all other cares, and dedicate your whole attention to the improvement of your mind, and pay a due respect to the Deity within you, and fear less to die than not to live according to nature; you will, by this means, become worthy of that Universal† Nature which produced you, and will no longer be a stranger in your own country; and will cease to be surprized at what happens every day, as if it were something extraordinary; nor be anxious and in suspense about the common events of life.

2. The Deity views the souls of all men, naked and stripped of those sordid, material

\* So the Stoics persuaded themselves, or endeavoured to do it.

† God. See B. iv. §, 23.

vessels in which they are contained, or the bark in which they are inclosed; (for his intellectual nature never approaches or comes into contact with any part of us, but that spiritual part which flows and is derived from his essence,) which, if you also would accustom yourself to do, you would free yourself from much trouble and distraction. For would he, who pays no regard to the very corporeal part that surrounds him; would such a one be very solicitous about dress, houses, splendid equipage or furniture, or any thing else of that kind?

3. In your person, you consist of three parts: your body, your vital spirit, and your rational soul. The two former, as they are committed to your care, may in some sense be called yours; but the third only is properly your own person. If therefore you separate from yourself, that is, from your intellectual part, whatever other people do or say; and also what you yourself have formerly done or said; and those future possibilities which disturb your repose; and those

those accidents which happen to the body which surrounds you, or to the vital spirit which is united to you, but which are not in your own power; and moreover, those external events which the current of human affairs may bring with it; so that your intellectual part, being exempted from those incidents which are allotted you by fate, may live within herself, free and independent; doing nothing but what is just; (pleased with whatever comes to pass, and speaking nothing but what is true :) If, I say, you can separate from your ruling principle those things which adhere to it from the contagion of sensual desires, and the memory of past, and the fear of future evils; and bring yourself to resemble the perfect sphere of Empedocles,\*

“ Rejoicing in its circling course,”  
and attentive only to spend the present time

\* The Commentators seem at a loss to account for this allusion; Horace probably means the same thing,

“ In se totus, teres atque rotundus.”

L. ii. Sat. 7.

well;

well; you may then proceed to live the remaining part of your life with tranquillity and honour, and at peace with yourself and your own conscience.

4. I have often wondered, whence it comes to pass, that although every one loves himself more than he does any other man, he should yet pay a greater regard to the opinion of other people concerning him than to his own. For, should some God, or some wise instructor, approach and command him not to indulge a thought, or form any design in his own breast, which he should be unwilling immediately to publish to the world, he certainly would by no means submit to it, even for a single day.

Thus, we stand more in awe of our neighbour's judgment concerning us, than of our own.

5. “ Whence is it, that the Gods, who  
“ have adjusted all things in such beautiful  
“ order, and with such love to mankind,  
“ should have neglected this one particular,  
“ namely, that some of the best of men,  
“ who have, as it were, carried on a con-  
“ tinual



“ tinal intercourse, and by many pious and  
 “ religious office, been admitted to a fa-  
 “ miliarity with the Divine Being, should  
 “ yet when they die have no longer any  
 “ existence,\* but be entirely annihilated  
 “ and extinguished?”

Now, if this be really the case, you may be assured, that if it ought to have been otherwise, the gods would have made it so.† For if it had been just, it would have been practicable ; and had it been according to nature, nature would have brought it to pass. Now, that it is not so, ( if really it is not‡ ) you may be assured of this, that it was not adviseable that it should be so.

\* This is supposed to be the objection of some sceptick; and by no means the Emperor's own opinion. Many of the philosophers imitated Socrates in this way of debate, though he undoubtedly believed a wise Providence and a future state.

† This reasoning must not be extended to the improvements of human industry, as it was by a *wise* Portugueze; who, in a debate on making a river navigable, said, “ If God had intended it should be navigable, he would have made it so.”

VOLTAIRE.

‡ This shews it was not the Emperor's own fixt opinion.

You

You see that, in this disquisition, you are debating a matter of justice with the gods. But we should not dare to dispute about the goodness and justice of the gods, if we were not convinced that they are possessed of those perfections: and if they are, they undoubtedly would not be guilty of this neglect, nor admit of any thing unjust or unreasonable in their administration of the world.

6. Accustom yourself to attempt those things which perhaps you despair to perform. For you may observe, that the left hand, which for want of exercise is useless in regard to other things, yet by being accustomed to it, holds the bridle more steadily than the right hand can do.

7. Consider in what state, both of body and soul, death ought to find you—reflect on the shortness of life, and the immensity of duration already past and which is to come, and the imbecility of the materials of which all things are composed.

8. Contemplate the souls of men stripped of the veil of flesh which surrounds them. Consider the tendency of men's actions; what

what pleasure and pain, what death and what glory, are! How many are the authors of their own trouble and vexation! Consider that no one is necessarily subject to the controul of another; and finally, that all things depend on opinion.\*

9. In the practising our moral maxims, we should imitate the *pugilist*, rather than the *gladiator*. The latter, if he parts with his sword with which he defends himself, is immediately slain; but the pugilist has always his fist ready for use, and has nothing to do but to manage it with skill and dexterity.

10. To understand the nature of things, we should consider separately their matter, their cause, and the end for which they were produced.

11. How great is the privilege of man! who is at liberty never to do any thing but what God himself will approve; and to be happy in whatever Providence allots him!

12. Whatever happens conformably to the course of nature, we cannot complain

\* Πάντα ὑπολήψεις. Lord Shaftesbury's favourite motto, as before observed.

of the gods; who, neither voluntarily nor against their will, can do any thing wrong; nor of men, who never voluntarily act wrong.\* We ought not therefore to complain at all.

13. How ridiculous and like a stranger to the world is he, who is surprized at any thing which happens in this life!

14. Either all things are fixed by a fatal necessity and an inviolable order; or they are governed by a benevolent providence; or they proceed at random, without any one to direct them.

Now, if there be an immutable necessity, why do we struggle against it? If a kind and merciful Providence presides, make yourself worthy of the divine assistance: if the world is all confusion, without any one to conduct it, comfort yourself however, that, amidst these tempestuous waves, you have an intelligent guide within your own breast. But even if you should be hurried

\* Because all *error* is involuntary, and no man acts wrong, but from mistaking his true interest.

See B. ii. §. 1.  
down

down the tide, it is your corporeal and vital parts alone that are snatched away; your intellectual part is beyond the reach of the storm.\*

15. As the lamp continues to shine, and never loses its splendor till it is extinguished; will you suffer your truth, your justice, or your temperance, to be extinguished, or their lustre to be diminished, before you yourself are extinct?

16. If any one gives you cause to suspect that he has been guilty of a fault, ask yourself, "How do I know whether this be a fault?" or if it be, consider, that probably he has condemned himself, and sincerely repents of it, and then he claims your compassion, as much as if he had torn his flesh in an agony of despair.

Besides, to expect that a vicious man should not act wrong, is as unreasonable as to expect a fig-tree should not have the acrid juice peculiar to it; that a child should not cry, or a horse neigh, or any other absur-

\* One cannot but pity the uncertainty under which the wisest heathens laboured.



dities of the same kind. For what can a man do who is a slave to such habits? If you then are such an acute physician, endeavour to cure him.

16. If a thing be not *proper*, do not do it; if it be not *true*, do not speak it. Let this be your invariable maxim.

17. Whatever object draws your attention, unravel and distinguish its cause, its matter, its end for which it was produced, and the time within which it must probably cease.\*

18. Do you not yet perceive, that you have within you something more excellent and more divine than those things which excite your passions and sensual appetites; and which turn you about as the wires do a puppet? What then does my ruling principle consist of? Is it fear? is it suspicion, or lust, or any thing of that kind? By no means.

19. Take care in the first place, to do nothing at random, or without some good end in view; and, in the second place, let

\* See B. ii. §. 24.

your actions have nothing in view but the good of mankind.

20. Reflect, that after a short time you yourself will be no more ; neither will any of those things which you now behold, nor those persons who are now alive, long survive you : for all things were intended by nature to change, to be converted into other forms, and to perish ; that other things may be produced in perpetual succession.

21. Every thing depends on opinion ; and that is in your own power. Rectify your opinions of things, therefore, when you please : And then, as when one has doubled some stormy cape, there is usually a calm ; so you will find all things steady, enjoy a tranquillity and a safe harbour.

22. No natural operation, that ceases at its proper time, suffers any detriment by its termination ; nor does the agent suffer any disappointment on that account.

In like manner the whole series of actions, which constitutes life, if it terminates in its proper season, receives no detriment by ceasing : nor does the person who thus  
terminates

terminates this series of actions, suffer any detriment. But the time and the period is fixed by nature; sometimes by your own nature or constitution, as when you die in old age; but always by the nature of the whole, whose parts being continually changing, the whole universe is preserved in perpetual bloom and vigour. Now that is always good and seasonable, which is conducive to the advantage of the whole.

The termination of life, therefore, cannot be an evil to any one, as there is no moral turpitude in it; for it is neither subject to our choice, nor adverse to society. Nay, it must be good, as it is seasonable and advantageous, and conformable to the order of the universe. Thus also *he* may be truly said to be conducted by God, who concurs with God in every thing; and that by his own approbation.

23. Amidst your moral reflections, these three seem to claim a particular attention:

First; In whatever you do, never to act at random; nor otherwise than justice herself would have acted: with regard to ex-

B b

ternal

ternal events, they either happen by chance, or are ordered by Providence. Now it is absurd to complain of chance, and wicked to accuse Providence.

Secondly; Consider what man is from his conception to his animation, and from his birth to his death; of what elements he is composed, and into what he is to be resolved.

Reflect, in the third place, That if raised aloft, you could look down upon human affairs, and discover their immense variety; conscious at the same time what numbers of exalted ætherial beings surround us: were you, I say, thus raised aloft ever so often, you would see only the same things, of the same species, and of the same short duration: yet these are the things which we are so proud of!

24. Get rid of this opinion of the matter, and all is well. And who can prevent you from getting rid of it?

25. When you are dissatisfied with any event, you forget, that all things are regulated with a view to the good of the whole; and

and that, if there be any fault, it does not concern you; and that what you now complain of, has often happened before, and will happen again; and is now going on in every part of the world.

You forget too, what a close alliance subsists between every individual and the whole human race; an alliance, not indeed of blood, but of mind or intellect.

You forget also, that the soul of every man is a kind of divinity, and an emanation from God; and that no man has a property in any thing: but that his favourite child, his own body and spirit, are derived from the same celestial source. In short, that opinion is every thing; and that the present moment only is what we really live or can lose.†

26. Frequently recollect, those who in times past have either been violently transported with rage and indignation, or who have been distinguished by the lustre of their exploits, or the excess of their misery, or their animosities, or any other instances of

† Book ii. §. 14.



good or bad fortune. Then make a pause, and ask, “where are they all now?” They are vanished like smoke, or reduced to ashes, or a mere name; or perhaps not even their *names* survive.

Recollect likewise such instances of affectation and singularity, as Fabius Catullinus at his country-seat; Lucius Lupus, and Stertinius, at Baiaë; Tiberius, in his retreat at Capreaë; and Velius Rufus; and in general that fondness for distinction in things of no importance, and their eager pursuits of the most worthless objects. How much more worthy of a philosopher is it to act with moderation and justice, in obedience to the gods, simply and without affectation! For nothing is more odious and intolerable, than a proud man, who affects a contempt of pride, and makes an ostentatious display of his humility and condescension.

27. Should any one ask you, where you have ever seen these gods, or what assurance you have of their existence, that you pay them this reverence? In the first place, you may answer, “They really are visible;

visible.\* Or, suppose they were not, neither have I ever seen my own soul; yet I pay it a degree of reverence: for the same reason, as I continually experience the power of the gods, I am convinced of their existence, and reverence them accordingly.

28. The safety of life depends greatly upon acting with caution, and examining carefully every object that occurs; its matter, and its form, or manner of existence; to do justice and to speak truth from our hearts. And then, what remains, but to enjoy life, and add one good action to another; so as to leave not a moment's interval unemployed in virtue?

29. There is but one and the same light of the sun; though divided by the interposition of buildings, mountains, and innumerable other [opaque] objects. There is but one common material substance, though distributed amongst myriads of different individual bodies. There is but one vital

\* Either in their works; or, perhaps he alludes to the stoical doctrine of the heavenly bodies being deities.

spirit, though it pervades ten thousand different beings circumscribed by their specific limitations; but one intellectual soul, though it may seem infinitely divided.

As for the other inanimate parts of this universe, which we have spoken of, consisting merely of matter and form, though void of sensation, or any common social affection;\* yet they are held together by the same intellectual Being, and by an attractive force or gravitation converge towards each other. But all intellectual or thinking beings have a peculiar tendency to unite with their own species; nor can this social affection be by any means suppressed.

30. What is it you are so desirous of? Is it mere existence? Is it to enjoy sensation, or to indulge your appetite? to grow, and to decay again? or even merely to exercise your conversable or your thinking faculty? Which of these is an object worthy of your

\* Casaubon says, this is one of the most obscure passages in the book. I have endeavoured to give his a sense, which the contrast seems to require. Every one is at liberty to give his own sense, when authors are obscure.

ambition?

ambition? If all these then are contemptible, proceed to that which only remains; to be guided by reason, and to obey God. But it is repugnant to the reverence which we owe to them, to grieve and be dissatisfied, that death must deprive us of those trifling enjoyments.

31. How small a portion of the boundless and immense duration of time is allotted to each individual! (For it will almost immediately be absorbed in eternity.)

And how small a part of the whole material substance, or the universal vital spirit, is allotted you: and on how small a clod of this whole earth are you crawling! When you reflect on these things, you will think nothing great, but to perform those duties which your own nature demands; and to acquiesce in those events which the common nature brings forth.

32. Consider, in what state your mind or governing principle now is: for on this all depends. As for other things, whether subject to your own will or not, they are in a mere lifeless state, and vanish like smoke.

33. This

33. This consideration must powerfully excite you to despise death; that even the Epicureans, who esteemed pleasure the chief good, and pain the greatest evil, yet these men despised death.\*

34. To the man who esteems nothing good beyond its due season; and who thinks it a matter of indifference, whether he lives to perform a greater or a smaller number of actions, conformably to right reason; or whether he surveys the universe for a longer or a shorter space of time; to such a one death cannot be very formidable.

O! my friend, you have lived a citizen of this great commonwealth, the world; of what consequence is it to you, whether you have lived precisely *five* years or not? What is according to the laws of the community, is equal and just to all. Is it any

\* They called death however φρικωδέστατον τῶν κακῶν, the most horrible of all evils; but endeavoured to silence their fears by a ridiculous quibble: "While we exist, death never comes; and when death comes, we are no more: therefore death is nothing to us"

hardship



hardship that you are sent out of the world, not by a tyrant, or an unjust judge, but by that Being which first introduced you? As the magistrate\* who engages an actor for the stage, dismisses him again at his pleasure.

“ But I have performed only three acts of the play, and not the whole five.”

Very true; but in life, even three acts may complete the whole drama. *He* determines the duration of the piece, who first caused it to be composed, and now orders its conclusion. *You* are not accountable for either. Depart, therefore, with a good grace; for he who dismisses you is a gracious and benevolent Being.†

\* The Curule Ædiles, or other magistrates, employed the actors in the Roman theatres, and often at their own expence.

† Though the critical reader may have been disgusted with the frequent repetition of the same sentiments, and with the unfinished appearance of some parts of this work; yet no one, I would hope, can have perused it with attention, that has not become wiser and better by the perusal. Every good heart must be in unison with that of Marcus Antoninus.

F I N I S.